



*Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond*  
**June 25 – July 3, 2014**

## **Table of Contents**

**The following news stories are divided into the following sections.**

**Aboriginal Arts & Culture**  
**Aboriginal Business & Finance**  
**Aboriginal Community Development**  
**Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement**  
**Aboriginal Education & Youth**  
**Aboriginal Health**  
**Aboriginal History**  
**Aboriginal Identity & Representation**  
**Aboriginal Inequality & Poverty**  
**Aboriginal Jobs & Labour**  
**Aboriginal Politics**  
**Aboriginal Sports**  
**Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources**  
**Land Claims & Treaty Rights**  
**Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women**  
**Special Topic: Residential Schools & '60s Scoop**  
**Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations**

# Aboriginal Arts & Culture

## Circus Without Borders hopes to inspire Iqaluit festival-goers

**Artcirq founder Guillaume Saladin wants people who see the film 'to take action'**

By Elyse Skura, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 24, 2015 2:06 PM CT Last Updated: Jun 24, 2015 2:06 PM CT

In between musical performances and cultural workshops, [Iqaluit's Alianait Arts Festival](#) is serving up a free screening of *Circus Without Borders*, a documentary film about how two leaders are using art to inspire change in their communities.

It follows the incredible friendship of Guillaume Saladin and Yamoussa Bangoura, who founded, respectively, Igloolik's Artcirq and the Kalabante in Guinea, West Africa.

"The stories have to do with the history of the Inuit people in Igloolik and the way in which the young people are able to go back to their roots, their heritage, that to some extent they've been cut off from," said producer Linda Matchan.

The idea for the film stems from an experience Matchan had while visiting Pangnirtung.

After returning from a hike, the Canadian-born journalist witnessed the incredible effect of suicide on Canada's Arctic. A young woman had taken her own life, leaving behind two young children.

"That community had been brought to its knees in grief and in mourning," she said.

"I began to wonder — why would this happen?"



Circus Without Borders tells the story of Yamoussa Bangoura (left), founder of Kalabante, and Guillaume Saladin, founder of Artcirq, who are both using circus performance to inspire youth. (Michele McDonald/Circus Without Borders)

When Matchan found out about Artcirq, she knew it was a story that had to be shared.

The film sheds light on the challenges facing many young Inuit, including unemployment, poverty and a disconnection from traditional values, but it is also chronicles the connection between two world-class performers.

"[Saladin and Bangoura] seem like total opposites. It seems as though they're completely different people on completely different paths," said the film's director, Susan Gray.

"Despite all of our outward differences it's really a story about the universality of humanity."

## Overcoming intense challenges

The film took seven years to produce, and took the crew to Nunavut, Guinea, the United States and France.

A film about both Nunavut and Africa was a tough sell to investors, but eventually the creators were able to collect the necessary funding through social media and organizational grants.

"At first I thought, 'Again, some Americans trying to make a flash story about us,'" said Saladin, adding that over time the performers came to realize what the filmmakers were trying to do.

"They were able to get into our circle of trust."



Last year, Artcirq performed Asiu at the Alianait Arts Festival. This year, the troupe from Igloolik will perform on June 30 and July 1. (Submitted by Ellen Skura)

Gray says both circuses "overcame problems along the way" and persevered: the group from Igloolik lost [Solomon Uyarasuk](#), who died while in police custody; the group from Guinea struggled with supporting themselves and their families.

When the film debuted in the United States several months ago, Gray says the audiences "got it."

"We got a standing ovation for a very long time and everybody said that they had tears in their eyes."

## **'Do something with it'**

The members of Artcirq have already seen the film, but this Monday will be the first time *Circus Without Borders* is shown in Iqaluit.

"I really hope that this video can inspire other people, just to follow their passion and to share with the rest of the world," said Saladin.

"To do something with it, not just be touched by watching the movie, but to take action after that."

The film has already been a source of personal inspiration for Matchan.

Over the course of filming, her husband was diagnosed with a terminal illness and died four years later.

"There were many times when I thought, 'You know, it would be so much easier for me to back out of this,'" she said. "What really kept me going was thinking about Kalabante and Artcirq and how what they are all about is never giving up."

"That's what I learned from these circuses: to have faith in yourself and to just keep moving forward."

*The Alianait Arts Festival presents Circus Without Borders and the short film Kajutaijuq: The Spirit That Comes at 6:30pm on Monday, June 29 at the Astro Theatre.*

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/circus-without-borders-hopes-to-inspire-iqaluit-festival-goers-1.3126264>

## **Couple honour First Nations culture, each other in traditional ceremony**

TOM AYERS CAPE BRETON BUREAU

Published June 24, 2015 - 7:54pm

Last Updated June 24, 2015 - 8:08pm





Bonny and Shawn Beaupre were married at Kejimikujik park in a traditional aboriginal ceremony.

Bonny Martell and Shawn Beaupre of Hammonds Plains started planning their wedding last Thursday and got married Sunday, working out all of the myriad details necessary to make their day special.

And then it rained on everyone but them.

While the happy couple stood under an umbrella outside a wigwam in Kejimikujik National Park, the small wedding party got wet.

But Martell, a Metis from Arichat, Richmond County, and Beaupre, a Mi'kmaq who grew up in Elmsdale, swear it didn't matter.

"Even though it poured rain, I didn't really notice," said Bonny, who has taken Shawn's last name.

"The beauty of the day shone through the rain anyway. And the spirit of our people was there with us in the wigwam when we signed our marriage certificate. "You could really feel it in the air."

Shawn said he was distracted by his beautiful bride.

"Where the wedding took place, it was kind of sheltered with trees, but when Bonny showed up, I didn't notice any rain," he said.

"At that point, the only thing I cared about was Bonny, and us being married. I saw everyone else standing in the rain, but man, I was just happy."

Although both have only recently begun learning about their traditional cultures, they said it was important to have the wedding in Kejimikujik National Park, which contains sacred aboriginal lands and petroglyphs.

Bonny wore a deer-hide wedding dress on loan from the family of Todd Labrador, a park ranger who also acted as a witness for the couple, and Shawn wore a traditional Mi'kmaq ribbon shirt.

They signed their wedding

documents inside a wigwam on a bearskin, and were married on National Aboriginal Day.

Neither grew up in the tradition of their cultures, but both began searching out their roots later in life.

Bonny, a court worker in Halifax, said getting married on June 21 held a special attraction for her and Shawn, but there was another reason they decided to elope rather than to plan out a wedding well in advance.

“Truth be told, I was having a lot of anxiety about planning a big Cape Breton wedding,” she said. “It’s my first marriage and Shawn’s second, and it just seemed too daunting for me.”

Shawn, a Canada Post letter carrier, said he wanted to relieve Bonny’s stress and the timing just seemed perfect with National Aboriginal Day four days away.

And while it was too rushed for a traditional native ceremony, the wedding party was smudged beforehand and there were enough symbols to make it special, he said.

“As a person who is coming into learning about native traditional ways, it’s part of my culture and it’s something I’m learning about,” said Shawn.

“Even though I couldn’t get a native person to do the ceremony, I still wanted to do it as close to tradition as I possibly could.”

The couple is planning a larger family event in the fall for Arichat, but now the pressure is off.

And they can look forward to the country celebrating their wedding anniversary every year when National Aboriginal Day rolls around.

“I thought what better day to get married?” said Shawn. “It’s very symbolic. It’s the summer solstice. It’s the day with the most light, although that day, it rained most of the day.

“But it all came together. I believe in the great spirit, or God, or the universe, just helping out sometimes. If it wasn’t meant to happen, it wouldn’t have happened.”

**Direct Link:** <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1295132-couple-honour-first-nations-culture-each-other-in-traditional-ceremony>

# Alianait festival promises Inuit culture with international flavour

**This year's theme is Unikkausivut, or sharing stories, says festival director Heather Daley**

By Elyse Skura, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 26, 2015 11:20 AM CT Last Updated: Jun 26, 2015 11:20 AM CT



Matuto, a Brazilian bluegrass band based in New York City, will be part of tonight's opening night concert at Iqaluit's Alianait Arts Festival. While they're in Nunavut's capital, the musicians are also holding workshops and taking in some of the region's traditional Inuit culture. (Submitted by Vincent Soyez)

An arts festival that mixes traditional Inuit culture with diverse, international performances kicks off Friday evening in Iqaluit, and visiting and local artists say they're ready to put on amazing shows.

The 11th edition of the Alianait Arts Festival will run six days and feature more than 60 performers, with big nightly events and days packed with free workshops and jam sessions.

"To be here, it's pretty interesting," said Ze Mauricio, a native of Brazil who is visiting Canada's North for the first time.

"It is a big cultural shock."

Mauricio is part of Matuto, a Brazilian bluegrass band based in New York city that draws inspiration from rural music from the South American country.



Popular events like KidsFest will be back again this year. (Submitted by Ellen Skura)

This past week, members of the group have been running a percussion workshop, teaching kids in Iqaluit how to make drums.

When the group takes the stage at tonight's opening concert, those young Nunavut artists will join them. And singer and guitarist Clay Ross says Matuto's trip doesn't end there.

"We're going to be at the main festival all week long."

The group received funding from the US Embassy in Ottawa to extend the trip.

It's welcome news to Ross, who says he's been itching to return to the territorial capital since he performed in Iqaluit several years ago.

"I loved it up here," he said.

"We've travelled all of the year - been to China, been to South America, been all over Europe. This is one of the most unique and interesting places on Earth, to me."

## **Under the big top**

Earlier this week, a crew hoisted that familiar purple and yellow tent outside Iqaluit's Nakasuk School, where many of the events will be held.

This year's theme for the festival is Unikkausivut, or sharing stories, an important part of Inuit culture.

"A lot of the stories are shared through song," said Heather Daley, the director of the festival. "And a lot of what Alianait does is sharing this music and stories in different ways."



Each year, Alianait creates opportunities for artists to collaborate. Last year, Greenland's Mike Thomsen, Frederik Elsner (with guitar), Kimmernaq Kjeldsen and Hans-Henrik Poulsen performed together as Akukittut. This year's Elsner returns with his popular band, Nanook. (Submitted by Ellen Skura)

Many of the most popular Alianait events are back this year, including KidsFest on Saturday morning at 10 a.m. and the Gospel Sing-a-Long at the Anglican Parish Hall on Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

Artcirq, the popular Igloolik circus troupe, also returns to the festival with guest performer Yamoussa Bangoura. And, on Monday evening, the festival is hosting a free movie night where Circus Without Borders will have its Iqaluit debut.

But Daley says this festival will also see some firsts.

"We do collaborations every year, but this is our first young circumpolar artists collaboration," she said.

"We're really excited."

Artists from across Nunavut, Nunavik and Greenland will perform a new act this Tuesday night --- which they haven't even begun to create.

"We're pulling all these wonderful young artists together," she said. "They're going to be getting together starting this afternoon with Sylvia Cloutier to put together a brand-new performance."

## **Saturday concert features popular Inuit acts**

"I'm really glad to be going back," said singer David Myles, who attended an Alianait concert in March, 2014.



Guillaume Saladin (on right), a founder of Artcirq, offers instruction to performers during a circus workshop at last year's Alianait Arts Festival in Iqaluit. The troupe has been performing at the summer festival for a decade. (Jeremy Lafond/CBC)

"I came back from that trip and I couldn't stop talking about how great it was."

But if you saw the award-winning artist last year, don't expect more of the same.

This year Myles will share the stage. He describes his "acoustic trio" as a little bit of bluegrass with more folk and pop songs.

Myles says he's looking forward to once again hearing Agaaqtoq, the young Arviat singer, who will also be performing in Saturday night's show.

Since he opened for Myles last year, Agaaqtoq has released his first self-titled album, a mix of Inuktitut and English songs.

Rounding out tomorrow's concert is Nanook, the immensely-popular band from Greenland who will perform in Iqaluit for the first time.

Tickets for the festival are available online, at the door, or at Arctic Ventures Marketplace.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/alianait-festival-promises-inuit-culture-with-international-flavour-1.3129050>

## **Legendary Inuit artist's works come to life in gallery exhibit**



# Pinnguaq, Ontario gallery team up for first-ever interactive Inuit art exhibition

LISA GREGOIRE, June 26, 2015 - 6:10 am



Screen captures from the Pinnguaq game Aeroplane, based on the 1976 Pudlo Pudlat print of the same name. Aeroplane is one of three games which form part of the “Ingirrajut Isumaginnguaqtaminnut: Journey Into Fantasy” interactive Inuit art exhibition currently on at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ont. (PHOTO COURTESY PINNGUAQ)



This is how the exhibition looks at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection gallery, with iPads set up for use and Pudlo Pudlat prints on the wall. (PHOTO COURTESY OF PINNGUAQ)



"Journey Into Fantasy" curator Elyse Portal, in front of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection gallery in Ontario. (PHOTO COURTESY ELYSE PORTAL)

When you look at the playful, colourful prints of Pudlo Pudlat, many things likely come to mind.

Here are two of them: the images often feature interaction between the natural, old world and modern technology; and though they are static, if you stare long enough, you can almost see the people, animals and machines moving.

Which is why it makes perfect sense that the gamers and animators at Pinnguaq might choose the works of the late Pudlat as templates for some new digital games.

And since the McMichael Canadian Art Collection outside of Toronto currently holds in its archive about 100,000 Cape Dorset prints and drawings, including thousands by Pudlat, it also makes sense for Pinnguaq and McMichael to work together, not only to make the games, but to display them in the gallery.

“A lot of his early work is really the first visual examination by Inuit artists, at the time, of the change that was going on,” said Pinnguaq director Ryan Oliver.

“It was great from a game standpoint, and a storytelling standpoint, because the story he was telling really appealed to us.”

The collaboration, called “Ingirrajut Isumaginnguaqtaminnut: Journey Into Fantasy,” is the first ever interactive Inuit art exhibition.

It comes on the one-year anniversary of McMichael’s partnership with York University in Toronto to digitize their Cape Dorset archive, which dates from 1959 to 1989.

The collection, on long-term loan from Cape Dorset’s West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative, was relocated to the McMichael gallery in Kleinburg, Ont., in 1991, on the assumption the invaluable works would be safe from possible fire and other disasters at the modest Baffin Island facility.

With money and resources gleaned from York’s [Mobilizing Inuit Cultural Heritage](#) (MICH) program, McMichael is in the process of making digital images, both for archive and for the web, so the works can be viewed and shared by northerners and other art lovers around the world.

That’s where Pinnguaq’s Oliver enters the story. He was interested to see some of the prints, and the digitization process, with a view to choosing some works for his next gaming project. And when he saw Pudlat’s work, he made up his mind.

“I fell in love with the way he viewed the world,” Oliver said. “He just embraced everything. He rolled with change as it came and he approached every situation saying, ‘how can I make the best of it’ and ‘how can I tell a story about it?’ So it was a natural fit.”

The best part about it, says “Journey Into Fantasy” curator Elyse Portal, is that Pudlat was known to embrace new media and new technology throughout his career.



Born in 1916, Pudlat lived a traditional hunting and camping lifestyle, said Portal, but in the 1940s, he injured his arm, went south for surgery, and when he returned, the print shop had opened so he decided to try something new.

He started to sketch his thoughts, fusing images of dog teams and polar bears with helicopters and airplanes.

“He would always observe what was happening around him and bring that into his particular Inuk world view,” said Portal. “He would transform planes into dogs, for instance. He had this really playful way of observing what was going on around him. So with Pinnguaq, it was a perfect match.”

In the McMichael exhibit — which runs until September and will likely come north afterward, to Iqaluit and Cape Dorset for starters — visitors will see iPads with three different games to play using graphics animated from Pudlat prints.

The games range in complexity, Oliver said, so they can appeal to a wide range of users — from older folks who have never played a video game to young people who play all the time.

That last demographic is key, say both Oliver and Portal. They’re keen to expose younger generations, especially young Inuit, to the works of veteran Inuit artists — to bridge the gap between old and new, the way Pudlat did.

“We really wanted to reach younger generations,” said Portal, “get them inspired by what has been produced and to make it accessible in a way where there’s learning, there’s fun, there’s a sense of history and the importance of culture all woven all together.

Oliver says these games are just the beginning. Pinnguaq has acquired the rights to two other prints from Pangnirtung: one from a living artist and one from an artist who is deceased, he said.

Animators hope to work with the living artist on a game so he can have input on the design and structure.

“We want them to use it as an extension of their existing art,” Oliver said. With Pudlat, they had to create narratives around old interviews and what scholars have said about him but with living artists can say, “here’s the piece and here’s what I was saying and here’s how we can bring it to life.”

The Pangnirtung-based Pinnguaq is definitely busy these days. The company is pitching games to [mining companies](#), running [gamer camps](#) for kids and sponsoring [new technology scholarships](#).

Pinnguaq is also featured in the upcoming Summer 2015 issue of *Inuit Art Quarterly*.

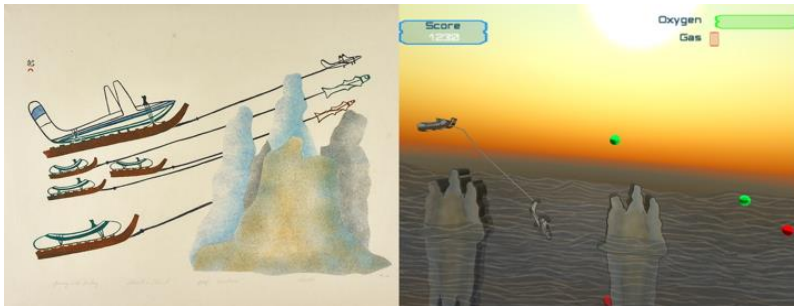
Apex-based illustrator Jonathan Wright's lush and terrifying images of Qalupalik, the deep-sea, child-stealing monster of Inuit legend, grace the cover and eight inside pages for an article on Pinnguaq's new mainstream video game idea.

Oliver said the game is still in early design phase but he's hoping to make it compatible on Mac and PC computers as well as Xbox and PlayStation platforms. It means shopping the idea around to investors, Oliver said, but he's confident because Qalupalik offers such great narrative material.

"There are so many amazing [Inuit] myths and amazing stories. We have an opportunity to bring those stories to people through a medium we're comfortable with," Oliver said. "Inuit myths, especially Qalupalik, can compete with Norse and Greek mythology."

And if that wasn't enough, Pinnguaq is also working on a virtual reality project.

But Oliver isn't willing to divulge any details yet. Stay tuned, he said.



Screen captures from the game Journey Into Fantasy, based on the 1980-81 Pudlo Pudlat print of the same name. (PHOTO COURTESY OF PINNGUAQ)

**Direct Link:**

[http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674legendary\\_inuit\\_artists\\_works\\_come\\_to\\_life\\_in\\_gallery\\_exhibit/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674legendary_inuit_artists_works_come_to_life_in_gallery_exhibit/)

## **Dave Bidini: Reflections on Aboriginal Day from the land of 24 hour sun**

[Dave Bidini](#) | June 26, 2015 | Last Updated: Jun 28 1:24 PM ET



Chief Ed Sangris is sworn in for his third term as the Yellowknives Dene Chief in Dettah, during the National Aboriginal Day ceremonies.

Last Sunday was two days in one: the Summer Solstice and Aboriginal Day. Here in Yellowknife, it was a chance to pour two traditional celebrations into one, making the visitor — the visitor being me — less careful about where to be and what to do. Festivities included a traditional fish fry, feeding of the fire, a cameo by Jordin Tootoo, and performances by the Scottish Metis dancers of North Slave (Great Slave Lake) as well as the Dene drummers. I cycled down to the main city park, where hundreds of Yellowknifers — not to be confused with the Yellowknives, a Dene band — gathered on stone steps through the day and all of its sunlight, which would, around midnight, dim a little but never abate, being, as we are in the north, at a nearly 24 hour glow.

As outdoor civic festivals go, it was fun, but after growing a little hinky, I remounted my bike and spun around town for awhile. The road eventually led me to Back Bay, which led me to Latham Island and, down the road, to the First Nations N'Dilo community, with its street signs written in Slavey and wood cuts in the shape and colour of the city's name. I'd asked a few friends about protocol — could someone from away travel down these roads? especially if this person was non-aboriginal, or worse, non-aboriginal from Toronto? — but everyone said it was fine. Still, I wanted to be certain. Here, and everywhere, the Truth and Reconciliation Report has brought to light the abuses of First Nations, a genocide that affects all Canadians. It's what I was thinking about as I swung down N'Dilo's looping roads carved into massive skulls of Precambrian rock tight to the ragged shore of Great Slave Lake, stunningly bright with the orangeyellow light that soaked the day.

We were punks, but really, we were cowards

People here talked to me about residential schools — their horrors, their legacy — and how, in one territorial community, entire families — parents, children, cousins — hid in the hillside through fall, winter and spring as a way of avoiding the wrath of the classrooms. They also talked about how long this had all gone on; in some cases, as late as 1996. I thought of what I was doing in 1996, and how, in earlier days, I'd pretended to be a punk, affecting a punk state of mind. I was listening to Billy Bragg and The Clash; protesting at the Litton plant in Etobicoke where they'd made cruise missiles; railing

against Reagan, Thatcher, Mulroney; and playing Rock Against Racism shows. I I thought I was doing good things — in a sense, I guess I was — but we did nothing to change our world at home. We were punks, but really, we were cowards. We turned our backs on Canadians who needed us because Doc Martens and the Sex Pistols and making a shirt out of safety pins was kind of cool. Tortured aboriginal kids were not.

I rode through N'Dilo until late — very late — past homes large and small, some of which had large teepees in their yards spiking the sky. Dudes worked on trucks, kids played on the street, and 4X4s hauling lakecraft — canoes, kayaks — sloped toward the water, getting on the lake after eight months of gruelling winter. I wondered if, after an endless legacy of darkness, maybe the relentless sunlight of this day — this Aboriginal Day — could be the beginning of something, and maybe, now, we could all move through it together.

**Direct Link:** <http://news.nationalpost.com/arts/dave-bidini-reflections-on-aboriginal-day-from-the-land-of-24-hour-sun>

## **Native American superheroes take comic books by storm**

### **A growing number of indigenous comic book artists are changing the face of this billion-dollar industry**

June 28, 2015 5:00AM ET  
by [Carrie Jung @Jung\\_Carrie](#)

KITIGAN ZIBI ANISHINABEG FIRST NATION, Quebec — Jay Odjick's affinity for comics started early. He bought his first Spider-Man comic book for 20 cents at the age of four. And it wasn't long before he felt the pull to write stories of his own.

"My mother says I started writing my own comic stories when I was around five," Odjick said. "But the caveat I always add is that my mother doesn't say I started writing good stories."

Odjick has steadily improved his skills over the years. Now 39, he's the creator of "Kagagi," a graphic novel that's professionally published and distributed across North America.

Like many graphic novels, "Kagagi" includes evil villains and superhuman powers. But what makes this comic book unique is that the characters and the storyline are deeply rooted in Algonquin culture.

Odjick, who is from the Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg Algonquin First Nation in Quebec, is one of a growing number of indigenous writers and artists who are jumping into the billion-dollar comics industry. Many bring their own life experiences and cultural traditions to their stories. And critics say their work is starting to reshape the way indigenous people are portrayed in this popular medium.

I thought it was really important that I create heroes that young Natives could relate to.

Jon Proudstar, comic book artist

In “Kagagi,” Odjick’s culture plays a central role from the very beginning, as the storyline springboards off of the Algonquin legend of Windigo, the story of an evil creature with the power to possess humans and turn them into cannibals.

The victims become “kind of like zombies,” Odjick said. And the only person who can stop the Windigo? A 16-year old Anishnabe boy with superhuman strength and the ability to fly.

An animated version of “Kagagi” currently airs on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, a cable channel whose programming reaches about 10 million households throughout Canada. Each episode is broadcast in both English and Algonquin.

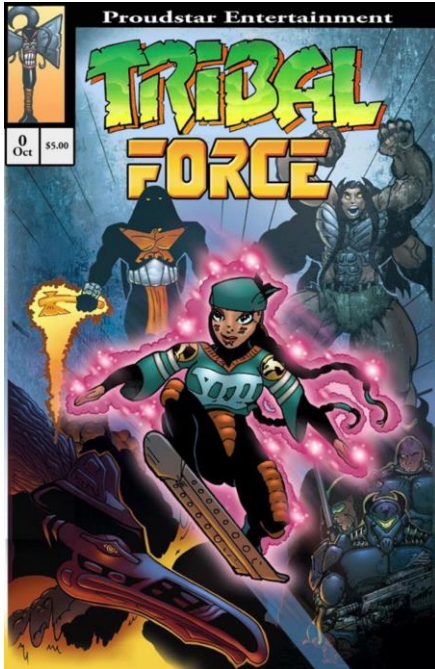
In a world where many indigenous tribes struggle to maintain their language, Odjick says he is excited about the opportunity to help preserve part of his culture “I’m not an educator,” he says, “but we can present language in a way that’s entertaining to [kids].”

## **Finding new heroes**

According to Michael Sheyahshe, author of “Native Americans In Comic Books,” Odjick’s celebration of Native culture is a long way from how Native Americans were portrayed in comics when the medium first rose to popularity.

Sheyahshe, who is a member of the Caddo Nation in Oklahoma, says when comic books first began seeing major commercial success in the 1940s, Native Americans were only written as diminutive one-dimensional characters and often portrayed as a threat to white protagonists.

By the 1960s and 1970s, though, Native characters began to play a more centralized role in storylines as various civil rights movements took hold throughout the United States. Sheyahshe cites Marvel’s Red Wolf, a nine-issue series that featured the publishing house’s first Native American superhero, as an example.



Cover of Jon Proudstar's "Tribal Force" Jon Proudstar

Still, Sheyahshe says that in that time period, almost none of the Native characters were the main heroes. “They’re the helpers. They did what they were supposed to,” he said. “[The heroes] couldn’t have gotten the job done without them, but [Native characters] didn’t have series of their own.”

Sheyahshe says it has only been in recent years that he’s begun to notice Native artists producing comic books starring Native characters. One of the first on the scene was Jon Proudstar’s 1996 series “Tribal Force,” a story about five young people granted supernatural powers in order to protect their land from being destroyed by the government.

Proudstar said he also takes great pride in his attention to detail. He didn’t just stick with characters from his own community near Tucson, Arizona. Each of his characters comes from a different tribe, and he spent a lot of time making sure their cultures were accurately and respectfully depicted.

“I knew very little about the Hunkpapa Sioux,” he says, “So I went to a couple of people who are Hunkpapa and asked them about their communities, what’s important to them.” His White Calf Buffalo Woman is one result of this research. After Proudstar learned that depictions of the White Calf Buffalo Woman are among the culture's most sacred images, he adapted her character to appear in the book as only a silhouette.

Proudstar said seeing Native American stereotypes and inaccuracies continue to show up in comic books was a big motivation for his work. But Proudstar also wanted to create a universe in which heroes face the same challenges that many Native kids face today, like



living with the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome and child molestation, problems that occur at higher rates in many Native communities than in the general U.S. population.

“I thought it was really important that I create heroes that young Natives could relate to,” Proudstar said. “I wanted to create heroes that taught these kids that they’ve got extra value because they suffered through that and survived.”

## Reflecting reality

While larger publishers like Marvel and DC have been releasing more comic books with Native characters in the past few years, some have critiqued these books for presenting stereotypes, as many Native characters are still depicted with loincloths and feathers.

But according to Sheyahshe, indigenous comic book consumers are starting to demand better representations of the world around them, and a growing number of Native artists are providing them. “There has been a low-level explosion of Native comic books” since about 2010, he said.

Though many writers self-publish and distribute their work within their local communities, there are also a handful of small and medium-sized comic book presses with national distribution networks that carry the work of Native artists.



Panel from Arigon Starr's "Super Indian 4" Arigon Starr

Toronto-based Alternative History Comics is one of them. In June it released “Moonshot,” a collection of indigenous comics by 18 Native writers and artists from a

variety of different cultures. Included are both traditional indigenous stories and adaptations of tribal legends set in the future and in space.

“This is something indigenous writers and artists had been wanting for a long time,” company president Andy Stanleigh said. “A lot of people are saying, ‘Finally’.”

“Moonshot” is the first book Stanleigh has published that contains stories from indigenous cultures with Native protagonists. He said the venture brought new considerations with it, especially when it comes to stories that had only been passed down orally. He explained that while some were easy to translate, others required explicit permission from elders to tell the story in a visual format.

Stanleigh, who is not of indigenous ancestry, said he pursued the book because he wanted to see more comics featuring Native characters that aren’t fraught with stereotypes.

“I can’t say with 100 percent certainty that it’s going to sell,” he said. “But I wouldn’t have started this project if we didn’t think it was something that was going to be big.”

For “Moonshot” contributor Arigon Starr, the growing presence of indigenous artists in comics just makes sense. “We’re all storytellers,” she said, “whether we choose to do this in artwork or in music or in comic books.”

There also seem to be more venues for their work. Broadband Internet and greater visibility for comics have helped people jump into the industry with greater ease. Unlike a generation ago, he believes many young Native people today actually feel as if they can become comic book writers. This, he said, is a good thing, because after so many years of being excluded or misrepresented, “we need to tell our own stories.”

**Direct Link:** <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/28/native-american-superheroes-storm-comic-books.html>

## **Powwow on Great Wall of China in works**



Fort William First Nation is hosting their annual powwow on Mount McKay this weekend. Opening ceremonies were held Saturday afternoon.



Posted: Sunday, June 28, 2015 6:00 am | *Updated: 6:00 am, Sun Jun 28, 2015.*

By Jodi Lundmark, CJ staff |

A group of local Aboriginal youths are hoping to host the first powwow on the Great Wall of China.

The City of Thunder Bay's Aboriginal liaison unit is looking for sponsors to send 10 Aboriginal youth to Jiaozou, China, in August to attend an international tai chi competition festival.

The delegation would include six dancers and four drummers, who would share their culture and tradition.

The announcement was made Saturday during Fort William First Nation's annual weekend-long powwow on Mount McKay.

Sister Cities committee member Peng You said the trip would help First Nations youth see beyond Thunder Bay.

"We want more young people to see their future, to open their eyes," said You. "We want to see up a stage on the Great Wall, an international stage."

After the journey, a delegation from Jiaozou will travel to Thunder Bay.

You said there is a sense of mystery around Canada and First Nations people to Chinese youth and when they come to the city, they won't just stay in Thunder Bay, but visit remote communities as well.

Fort William First Nation is sponsoring one of its residents, Bess Legarde, for the trip and the dancer said although she's nervous for the long flight, she's excited for the two cultures to interact.

"Being the first powwow to happen on the Great Wall is pretty ideal," she said. "I'm looking to learn more about their traditions. . . . Seeing their landscape, seeing how life is on a day-to-day, those are the things I'm looking forward to."

Legarde hopes to show the Chinese delegation how First Nations in Canada use the natural resources of the land for things like medicine and she also wants to show them how respectful the nation is to one another.

Legarde was also participating in the weekend's powwow, which this year was honouring the community's women.

"Women are the lifegivers of our people," she said. "They are more respected. They are more cherished in our culture and we wanted to do something to honour them."

As a more experienced dancer in the community, it was important for Legarde to be a part of the event.

“It’s more of an honour for me to be here,” she said. “I feel like more of a role model for the younger people, so I really encourage younger youth to come and dance.”

**Direct Link:** [http://www.chroniclejournal.com/news/local/powwow-on-great-wall-of-china-in-works/article\\_b4621c46-1d4b-11e5-bc04-3bfa47c61083.html](http://www.chroniclejournal.com/news/local/powwow-on-great-wall-of-china-in-works/article_b4621c46-1d4b-11e5-bc04-3bfa47c61083.html)

## **Terra Nova National Park hike is the place for 'incredible edibles'**

**Unique hike offers education about aboriginal culture, what plants you can eat in the woods**

By Julia Cook, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 28, 2015 6:27 AM NT Last Updated: Jun 28, 2015 12:06 PM NT



Starlen Thistle is an aboriginal interpreter at Terra Nova National Park. (Julia Cooke/CBC)

It's my first time in Terra Nova National Park and it's hard not to gawk out at the spanning landscape. But on the Incredible Edibles hike, people are asked to look at the forest floor, instead.

Starlen Thistle leads a small group of hikers — including myself — along the Goowidy Trail. Every once in a while she stops, walks off the beaten path and bends over to show us some plants. One is Labrador Tea; the other is Lambkill or Goowidy.

"Just going to pick a couple of leaves here. All of these plants at first glance looks a lot alike ... one is actually edible, the other is poisonous."

### **Learning more every year**

Starlen is an aboriginal interpreter at Terra Nova and has been leading these hikes for a few years.

"The visitors that come here teach me as much as I teach them, so every year I learn more and more," says Starlen.

Starlen continues on down the path. It's a bit early in the season, so many flowers and berries aren't out yet. She squats and asks the group if we recognize the cracker or bunch berry.



Aboriginal interpreter Starlen Thistle handled a plant called goowidy, or lambkill. (Julia Cooke/CBC)

"The taste itself is very bland, but the aboriginal people used to use it years ago because it contains so much pectin, for jams and jellies and thickenings and things like that."

The hike isn't just about telling people what plants they can and cannot eat in the woods, but also about educating people about aboriginal culture in Newfoundland and Labrador.

"What we try to promote is aboriginal awareness, that we still have a lot of people that live that way and that really stick with their culture and their roots. You know, it's beneficial to the body, the mind and the soul."

## **Stay away from the poisonous variety**

The group stops again and surrounds Starlen. She picks off leaves of the Blue Bead Lily and passes them around. Each of the hikers take a bite of the leaf. It tastes like cucumber.

"That's edible, but remember again, the berries on top, the blue beads, are poisonous."

The group returns to the visitors centre near the wharf. It's there that I meet up with Megan Tilley, who's the interpretation co-coordinator at Terra Nova National Park.

"This [hike] is something that the park needs to have because it's basically exploring our own environment right out in our backyard."

I return back to my car, with a bit more knowledge and a few more bug bites. Already, I've baked with some dandelion greens and the flowers, though I know to double check to make sure what I'm eating is edible.

The hikes in Terra Nova National Park last through until late summer and schedules can be found on the provincial web page.

As for Starlen Thistle, there's no other place she'd rather spend her summer.

"It is a dream job, and yes I'm sure I'll be here for years to come."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/terra-nova-national-park-hike-is-the-place-for-incredible-edibles-1.3129197>

## Historic war-canoe races return to Victoria's Inner Harbour

By [Justin McElroy](#) Web Producer Global News



**READ MORE: A week after National Aboriginal Day, another historic moment for First Nations on Vancouver Island. For the first time in more than a century, traditional war canoes returned to race in Victoria's Inner Harbour. Kristen Robinson has the story.**

For tourists, it may have looked like an ordinary canoe race in Victoria's Inner Harbour.

But for Chief Andy Thomas of the Esquimalt First Nation, it was a momentous occasion.

"We had canoes from all up and down the island that used to come here and race and compete against each other. Just to bring everyone together to share a meal, and share a day, and keep that connection," he said.

Today, that tradition was restored, as war canoes raced in the Inner Harbour for the first time in more than 100 years.

Five different First Nations took part in the day, and many enjoyed the chance to connect with their heritage.

“My father and my grandfather built canoes, and I’m going to pass it down to my children,” said Jedson August, a Paddler and Canoe Builder.

“Hopefully this event can continue. We’ll certainly do everything we can to make sure it becomes an annual event,” said Ian Robertson, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority CEO.

**Direct Link:** <http://globalnews.ca/news/2080619/historic-war-canoe-races-return-to-victorias-inner-harbour/>

## **Canadian Metis artist collaborates with fashion powerhouse Valentino for 2016 collection**

[National News](#) | June 30, 2015 by [Brandi Morin](#)



**Brandi Morin**

**APTN National News**

Canadian Metis visual artist Christi Belcourt can now add fashion to her list of achievements.

One of the world’s top fashion designers has partnered with Belcourt in their 2016 Resort collection.

The Italian-based Valentino collection revealed two weeks ago features stunning flowery, elegant pieces based upon Belcourt's 'Water Song' painting found in the National Gallery of Canada.

"It was a very good experience," said Belcourt. "It's just been wonderful to work with them all around. They were extremely respectful."

Valentino representatives contacted her via email a couple of months ago saying they had saw her art and were interested in working with her. However, Belcourt wanted to be sure she did some research before jumping on board.

In recent years the mainstream fashion industry has appropriated Native cultural designs which has caused offense to some artists and nations whose artistic designs were replicated without permission.

Belcourt was happy they approached her to collaborate but was more impressed to learn that Valentino is eco-conscious.

"The number one thing to me is always, not only how we're treated as Indigenous peoples, but how is the environment treated. I was really pleased and surprised that Valentino is ranked number one by Greenpeace for all top fashion designers. They have built into their company environmentally and socially conscious steps and they've also committed to eliminate all hazardous materials by the year 2020."

The "Water Song" piece is an "ode to water," said Belcourt, who believes that water is the most pressing issue of modern times.



“I think we all have an obligation and responsibility to protect the waters of the earth,” she said.

Using her art to create awareness on social issues also intertwines with her work advocating for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. She is involved with the Walking With Our Sisters travelling exhibit and says the fashion designs help to portray women in a broader light.

“There’s a correlation between the environment and the way that Indigenous people are treated and how the aggression to our lands parallels to our bodies as Indigenous women. So, it’s all linked together,” she said. “For me it’s certainly not about a high profile or any type of career. I don’t see it as that...only if we can produce beautiful things that remind people of our responsibilities as human beings to the environment and to each other.”

The collection titled, The Resort, features 80 pieces of which Belcourt’s designs are used in numbers 2 through 10.

The couture designs feature floor length dresses, jackets and two piece ensembles. They are feminine, soft and enchanting featuring silky, lace, sheer and other amalgamated fabrics with classic Metis flower art patterns reminiscent of beadwork.

“They’re just gorgeous, contemporary pieces. They’re not, however trying to replicate traditional regalia or anything like that.”

It’s a dream come true for the artist, who is originally from Lac Ste. Anne, Alta., and now lives near the shores of Lake Huron, Ont.

The designs are available for purchase and can be [seen online here](#).

**Direct Link:** <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/06/30/canadian-metis-artist-collaborates-fashion-powerhouse-valentino-2016-collection/>

## **Joyous Celebration: Feting Canada With Indigenous Song, Dance and Art**

[Hans Tammemagi](#)

6/30/15

Drumbeats thundered around the inner harbor in the heart of picturesque Victoria, British Columbia. The rhythmic thumping drew upwards of 30,000 people over three days to an amazing festival of west coast First Nations culture—stories, dances, art, masks, regalia—that unfolded in the public plaza in front of the Royal British Columbia Museum.



It put First Nations front and center for National Aboriginal Day, the beginning of 10 days of celebrations leading up to Canada Day on July 1. On June 21, though, hearts beat extra proudly, especially in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation report of June 2.



A fierce Tzinquaw Dancer performs. (Photo: Hans Tammemagi)

“This is a very special time,” said Isabel Clutesi, of the Nuu-cha-nulth Dance Group, who has been dancing for 24 years. “We’re reclaiming our dances and stories, and we’re teaching them to our little ones.”

The plaza was jam-packed; even standing room was hard to find. Lieutenant Governor Judith Guichon appeared in a traditional blanket. It was a sun-soaked, happy, throbbing place. Although National Aboriginal Day was celebrated throughout the country, this festival was likely the biggest, and happiest. Dancers acted out traditional stories, donning animal masks to bring real and mythical creatures to life: raven, orca, bear and thunderbird, to name a few.



Le-La-La dancer wearing a transforming mask. Raven, orca, bear and thunderbird were just a few of the mythical creatures brought to life at the Aboriginal Cultural Festival in Victoria, British Columbia. (Photo: Hans Tammemagi)





George Taylor, festival emcee and leader of the Le-La-La Dancers (Photo: Hans Tammemagi)

Dance groups flocked in from Vancouver Island as well as the mainland. For three days under a brilliant blue sky, a continuous pageant of more than 30 stage shows featured a glorious cornucopia of Native cultures in a jubilant celebration of indigenous life. It formed an exuberant counterpoint to the negative stereotypes that sometimes seem to reign across much of Canada.

The Le-La-La Dancers and their leader and the festival emcee, the ever-smiling George Taylor, steered the celebration, held on Songhees and Esquimalt traditional lands. The Lekwungen Traditional Dancers and the Esquimalt Singers and Dancers represented the two host nations. From the Métis came the fiddling and fast footwork of JJ Lavallee and the B.C. Métis Federation of Jiggers.



Le-La-La Dancers, Kwakwaka'wakw Nation, in bear costumes (Photo: Hans Tammemagi)

Meanwhile three-time world-champion hoop dancer Alex Wells of the Lil'wat Nation shimmied his way into festivalgoers' hearts as he transformed his hoops into a thunderbird, a globe and other shapes and creatures.



Detail from a totem in Thunderbird Park (Photo: Hans Tammemagi)

Besides the host Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations, numerous other sponsors backed the event, including Aboriginal Tourism B.C. and the Royal British Columbia Museum. A deep sense of family ran through everything, and a quiet Native humour was pervasive.



Small children would take a second away from their own drums to playfully tap on an adult's. Here is Lason Taylor, only 4 years old and already drumming. (Photo: Hans Tammemagi)

Small children dressed in full regalia would wander among the dancers beating a little drum, sometimes reaching up mischievously to strike at an adult's drum. Attendees could savour barbequed salmon and chowder at the food pavilion, or shop for carvings and jewelry in the crafts market.

On a more sober, but educational note, tours of nearby Thunderbird Park showcased the history and meaning of the 12 towering cedar poles and great house. A daily walking tour of the inner harbor taught about the significance of this area to the Songhees Nation and recounted the history of how the people had been removed from their beloved land.

But overall, enthusiasm and pride overflowed as the province's capital city joined in a joyous celebration of Native cultures.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/06/30/joyous-celebration-feting-canada-indigenous-song-dance-and-art-160905>

## Salish Stroll connects visitors with the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations' cultural worlds

**Collaboration on old-growth trail between Fairmont and SLCC emphasizes community partnerships**

By [Cathryn Atkinson](#)



**Walk on the wilderness side** Brady Smith, the SLCC's executive director (right), Norman Mastalir, managing director of the Fairmont Chateau Whistler (left) with Joshua Joseph (third from the left) and members of the Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations. They led the opening of the Salish Stroll trail.

The cultural world of the two indigenous First Nations in the Sea to Sky region begins and ends with their connection to the wilderness.

The Squamish and Lil'wat communities, based to the south and north of Whistler respectively, meet at the resort's Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre (SLCC), with their art, artifacts and food presented to visitors from around the world and shown by members who act as ambassadors.

Now the wilderness and the centre are better connected than ever with the opening of the Salish Stroll, a short interpretive trail that passes through a stand of old-growth forest in the Upper Village.

The trail is short, about half a kilometre, and is graded and accessible for people of all abilities. It is a year-round trail and will be kept clear in the winter.

The Salish Stroll was officially opened on Monday, June 29, providing a look at both the flora and fauna and the cultural uses made of the forest through signage and displays. This includes information about animals, plants and trees, and how they connected to both communities.

It was completed with a \$10,000 grant from the Fairmont Chateau Whistler's company program, Community Assistance and Responsibility to the Environment (CARE). The trail provides easy access to the SLCC and guests from the hotel, and is free and open to all.

Norman Mastalir, managing director of the Fairmont Chateau Whistler, said the hotel and the SLCC had worked together.

"We think the partnership between the centre and the hotel is so important," Mastalir explained.

"We welcome more than 100,000 guests a year to Whistler and we think every one of them should see this place and understand the cultural significance of the centre. This little path is an opportunity to make it a more enjoyable experience."

Joshua Joseph of the Squamish Nation is current president of the SLCC board.

Asked about the significance of the stroll project, Joseph said it was about building partnerships.

"We have a lot to offer with the SLCC. It is always our goal to share our culture; we just want to participate in this economy and educate people about who we are," he said.

"Historically, our two nations were connected through trails through the rivers and the mountains. It's quite amazing how we're still doing this today with other organizations."

Brady Smith, the SLCC's executive director, said the project had been planned for a year. The trail was completed in April.

"It gives people more of a green experience before they get to the cultural centre," he said.

"We want guests to understand that the flora and fauna are the beginnings of both the cultures of the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations. Both nations still live off the land and still thrive by using the flora and fauna."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.piquenewsmagazine.com/whistler/wild-mustangs-and-the-working-cowboys-of-wyoming/Content?oid=2662090>

## **Aboriginal Business & Finance**

# Boosting First Nation economies a part of reconciliation

[National News](#) | June 26, 2015 by [Trina Roache](#)



**Trina Roache**

**APTN National News**

An Aboriginal business leader says the economy is a vital path for reconciliation with First Nations in Canada.

J.P. Gladu was in Halifax recently talking to industry, government and Mi'kmaq and Maliseet peoples. He heads the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

Some of the 94 recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission focus on economic development. They call for “meaningful consultation” and “equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector.”

“The business lens is a way we can help reconcile,” said Gladu. “We can help empower our communities by providing direct source contracting, we can get more training in front of our people, as I mentioned we’ve got a strong demographic, that is a real asset to Canada but we’ve got to be able to put the resources behind it to make it become a reality.”

The news for First Nation economies on reserve has been bleak. A recent report by the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (NAEDB) points out a widening gap for First Nations, with on reserve communities faring the worst.

It puts the average income for Aboriginal people at \$20,000 a year, which is \$10,000 lower than non-Aboriginal workers. The employment rate on-reserve sits at just 35 per cent.

In the report, Chair of the NAEDB Chief Clarence Louie writes that “the opportunities for economic development for Aboriginal people today are greater than ever.” Yet at the same time, “Aboriginal people in Canada are currently not on track to achieving parity with non-Aboriginal Canadians.”

Gladu says while Indigenous communities have been marginalized, he's sees things changing for the better. He says First Nations just have to remember their own history.

"We used to be amazing entrepreneurs back in the days of the fur trade, so we're embracing that entrepreneurial spirit. There are a number of impediments in our way and past challenges that we're still dealing with," said Gladu. "But the timing is good. The idea of trades and skill development are top of mind especially with the Truth and Reconciliation Report that just came out so Canada is listening."

The Membertou First Nation in Nova Scotia is bucking the trend. The urban reserve situated in Sydney, Cape Breton, is an economic driver for the region. A growing business park features a mix of big box and small retail stores, a Hampton Inn Hotel, and the ever-popular Tim Horton's.

Chief Terry Paul's office on the third floor of Membertou's Trade and Convention centre overlooks the construction of a new sports centre.

"Membertou's own revenues top \$100 million," said Paul. "We employ 700 people at peak seasons. Those are all people with jobs, who pay taxes, or buy consumer goods, pumping more money into the economy."

Half of those jobs are non-Mi'kmaq people coming to work on the reserve. A sure sign that times have changed. But Paul said there's still a lot of work to do, starting with public perception. It's shifting, but he still runs into a lack of understanding.

"People think we're getting something the rest aren't, that we don't want to work, that we don't pay taxes," said Paul. "We do what needs to be done to educate the public. We are good to deal with, we improve the economy, improve the tax base of the city. The jobs here? The municipality benefits more than ourselves. We contribute."

The biggest obstacle to success for aboriginal business is the Indian Act. In the early 1900s, Indian Affairs bureaucrat Duncan Campbell Scott was famously quoted as saying he wanted to "get rid of the Indian problem."

"Despite all the barriers, we're still here," said Paul. "Making a living. We've adapted."

And now, Membertou is working on how to rid of the problematic Indian Act.

"The Indian Act gets in the way," said Paul. "Always the first thing to come up, it's hard to do anything. The land designation process is ridiculous. A major hold up is in the addition to reserves. It takes four and a half years, on average, to designate lands. Compared to six months for the municipality."

Paul borrows a popular quote, "We need to move at the speed of business."

And the Indian Act is an albatross in more ways than one.

“As we know, we can’t leverage, there’s no collateral,” said Gladu. “It’s really difficult to create or attract investment in our communities if there’s no safeguards to protect the investment.”

Under Section 89 of the Indian Act, reserve lands or assets can’t be mortgaged or levied. It’s an issue that came up at the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development back in February.

Andrew Beynon, Deputy Minister for the Lands and Economic Development with the department, said the provision “was originally intended to prevent unscrupulous creditors from taking advantage of individuals, but it has now become a key obstacle to raising capital.”

Beynon outlined some of the “legislative tools” government has come up with to get around the Indian Act, namely a number of other Acts, including First Nations Land Management and Fiscal Management.

Membertou, like many First Nations, is developing its own land use codes. So the band can decide what it will do with its own land. So it can continue to take advantage of its urban location, with a new highway interchange to draw in more traffic, more business.

Location, Location, Location. If the real estate adage rings true, many reserves are remote or tucked away off the beaten path, plagued by poverty and high unemployment.

Reserves are hemmed-in by artificially drawn boundaries. In Mi’kmaq and Maliseet territories in the Atlantic provinces, the Peace and Friendship Treaties never ceded land. Tripartite negotiations are on-going in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI to establish how those rights to land and resources will play out in a modern context.

“The Treaties open up huge possibilities,” said Paul, who’s also co-chair of the Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs. “On the table – ownership, employment, royalties, investments. The Supreme Court of Canada has told us our rights are real. Let us be part of the economy.”

Paul said it’s vital for First Nations to develop their own-source revenues. Whether it’s an urban reserve pursuing commercial opportunities, or a remote First Nation utilizing its natural resources.

“As Aboriginal People we recognize the value is our land,” said Gladu. “And that’s always been our starting point, as people, that’s where we get our sustenance from, and that needs to be on the table in negotiations when we talk to industry and government. Respecting the treaties, respecting our rightful place in Canada as a First People and leveraging our natural resources together. That’s our catalyst. That’s our starting point and that’s our strength.”

But the reality is First Nations are often excluded from Canada's economy, said Paul. And it shows.

"Most times on reserve, standards of living, education levels, housing conditions, poverty, all in the negative," he said.

Paul, who sits on the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, said, "There's all kinds of money out there. But First Nations only have access to 0.1 per cent of one per cent of the available capital in Canada."

At the House of Commons Committee meeting for Aboriginal Affairs, Beynon said, despite the challenges, "There really should be some tremendous optimism. You have a growing reserve land base. You have greater closeness of First Nations with neighbouring communities as they expand. You have more and more experience of many First Nations with heavy-duty commercial activity. You have an increasing generation of tax revenues and this initial experience with bond financing."

"I would suggest again moving away from the Indian Act restrictions, which I think we've talked about both on lands and moneys management," said Beynon. "We need to build more capacity and stable capacity among First Nation governments. We have programming where we try to do that. The more that they have the experience, and the direct capacity and knowledge of financial systems, the more effective they're going to be at unlocking these opportunities."

Everyone agrees – First Nations have great demographics. A fast growing young population. The statistics show that 400, 000 aboriginal youth will enter the Canadian workforce by 2025. That potential is tarnished by the stats on education.

The NAEBD reports a high graduation rate of 62 per cent. It is still lower than the mainstream Canadian population, but an improvement from levels a decade ago.

The TRC has called on Ottawa to close the gap on education and employment by coughing up more money for First Nations.

In Membertou, gains in the economic base translate into better education. The First Nation boasts a new \$8 million state-of-the-art, eco-friendly elementary school. And a 100 per cent high school graduation rate in recent years.

As the band's economy has taken flight, said Paul, so has community pride. And he sees it at the annual youth conference Membertou hosts.

"At first heard they all wanted to work for the band or be chief. And that's great," said Paul. "But now we're hearing lawyers, accountants, police officers, and that's even better."

Paul's own son is in the third-year of a commerce degree.



“And I asked him what he’d like to do, would he come back to the reserve? And he said, no Dad, I want to see the world, I hear the euro needs help,” said Paul.

Paul laughs. But he’s proud. And though he hopes his son brings his smarts back to the reserve someday, he appreciates the “sky-is-the-limit” attitude.

*Direct Link:* <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/06/26/boosting-first-nation-economies-part-reconciliation/>

## Province partners with Siksika First Nation to bolster small businesses

[Daryl Slade, Calgary Herald](#)

Published on: June 26, 2015 | Last Updated: June 29, 2015 8:53 AM MDT

Small businesses and the community in general at Siksika First Nation will be the winners in a new financial partnership between the reserve, the Alberta government and Indian Business Corp.

The three partners announced on Friday that Siksika, an hour east of Calgary, will contribute \$2 million, the province will chip in another \$700,000 and IBC, owned by all First Nations in Alberta, will oversee distribution of loans to create and develop business opportunities for members on and off the reserve.

“We have the willingness, the capacity and means to move forward in helping them develop their own economic entrepreneurship,” Siksika Chief Vincent Yellow Old Woman said at a news conference announcing the deal.

“With the province’s contribution, we’ll have \$2.7 million available to our members. We want to energize our members, helping them in any way we can to make them see there is light at the end of the tunnel ... in a tangible way. And the province is stepping up to the plate to give us the partnership we need.”

Kathleen Ganley, minister of justice, solicitor general and aboriginal relations for the NDP government, said small business remains central to Alberta’s economy and accounts for 96 per cent of all businesses, and contributes 27 per cent of the GDP. Small businesses also employ one in three Albertans working in the private sector.

“There are more businesses owned by indigenous people today than ever before,” she told the news conference. “Even more impressive, indigenous women are starting businesses at double the rate of other Canadian women. For many indigenous people, starting a business can mean economic prosperity and improved quality of life. Indigenous entrepreneurs also face significant challenges. They lack access to capital to

begin business and grow it, so removing this barrier will help First Nations people improve their standard of living through entrepreneurship.

“The problem we’re trying to solve is that banks are often unwilling to advance them funds in these circumstances and the funds needed ... the people who develop plans are in the best position to see how it’s all distributed.”

IBC chairman Jack Royal said he hopes the “historic” partnership will create a lot of opportunities on and off reserves for the members.

“Together, we are trail-blazing,” said Royal. “Despite the success of many innovative aboriginal businesses in Canada, with few exceptions, Canada’s largest banks are not able to provide capital to our members. IBC has identified these missed opportunities. Since 1987, IBC has provided close to \$70 million in loans and created and funded 2,500 businesses for expansion ventures.

“So much of our success is a result of our deep cultural knowledge and understanding of the needs and requirements of our people. We are proud of the positive impact of partnerships with First Nations communities.”

IBC’s Rob Rollingson said business loans have ranged from \$5,000 to \$800,000, with the average about \$80,000.

He said they have been used for everything from windshield repair shops to cow-calf operations, fashion, media outlet, convenience stores and many other businesses.

Yellow Old Woman said the loans could also be used for businesses to help cleanup and recovery from the devastating 2013 flood, if someone presents such an application.

“This was a 100-year flood and there is no template available that says, ‘This is how you do it,’” he said. “There are some challenges, many challenges. There is still a lot of damage and a lot of work to be done.

“We’re very grateful that the people affected are now at hotels and out of the ATCO trailers. Neighbourhoods are starting to rebuild.”

**Direct Link:** <http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/province-partners-with-siksika-first-nation-to-bolster-small-businesses>

## **Saskatchewan First Nation brews up Tim Hortons franchise**

By [Thomas Piller](#) Associate Technical Producer Global News



Little Black Bear First Nation in Saskatchewan brews up Tim Hortons franchise and Petro-Can gas station on reserve land.

FORT QU'APPELLE, Sask. – A new business is brewing on a Saskatchewan reserve near Fort Qu'Appelle. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Monday as Little Black Bear First Nation officially opened its own Tim Hortons franchise and a new Petro-Canada gas station.

“This is the first Tim Hortons franchise in the province that’s located on-reserve,” said Elizabeth Jordan, national director of aboriginal markets at RBC Royal Bank.

Little Black Bear First Nation Chief Clarence Bellegarde says it all started in 2005 with a plan focused on creating economic stability for the community through the development of new businesses.

“This was part of a long process of developing and an economic development plan for that community, that the First Nation embarked upon 10 years ago,” said Jordan.

“In this case, we came in to finance once Petro-Can and Tim Hortons had already agreed with the First Nation on their business terms.”

“We had some discussions with a number of banks and RBC, being one of them, we understood that they had an aboriginal branch, dealing with aboriginal business from their side of it,” said Bellegarde.

Today, under one roof sits a Petro-Can and in the other half of the building is a full-service Timmy’s ready for hungry travellers on Highway 10.

“We own both of them ... they’re sitting on reserve land,” said Bellegarde.

The aboriginal-owned businesses have created jobs and are generating revenue for the community.

“We want to continue building capacity and create wealth for our First Nation, so we’re going to be looking at the business development and we’ll be using certainly a lot of this as equity injection into new businesses and it will also go to unfunded programs at the

reserve level, programs that are sorely needed for our youth, for our elders,” said Bellegarde.

“It brings a sense of pride to our people, knowing that we can do this, knowing that we have partners that are willing to partner up with us to create business opportunities like this.”

Bellegarde says the apple fritters and steeped tea at their local Tim Hortons aren’t too bad either.

**Direct Link:** <http://globalnews.ca/news/2080034/saskatchewan-first-nation-brews-up-tim-hortons-franchise/>

## **Inuit-owned Arctic airline signs 10-year freight deal with Cargojet**

### **First Air, Cargojet to work together until 2025**

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, July 02, 2015 - 5:48 am



Cargojet will carry freight to Iqaluit and other northern centres for another 10 years, thanks to a deal with First Air that extends to 2025. (FILE PHOTO)

First Air, a major air carrier in Nunavut, Nunavik and the Northwest Territories, has turned its recent short-time hookup with Cargojet into a 10-year marriage, the two companies announced June 30.

The two air carriers announced they’ve signed a commercial co-operation agreement that will keep them together until 2025.

Cash-strapped First Air, owned by Nunavik’s Makivik Corp. has been rejigging its northern operations ever since a [potential merger deal with Canadian North fell through](#) in October 2014.

Company officials now say the Cargojet agreement offers First Air a chance to achieve profitability in cargo operations and better serve its customers.

“Our goal with this agreement is two-fold. It is intended to create financially viable cargo operations in the North and to expedite service to our customers,” First Air CEO Brock Friesen said in a news release.

Cargojet is big national air freight carrier with facilities in 14 Canadian cities, as well as Bermuda and Newark, N.J.

The company’s shares, which trade on the Toronto Stock Exchange, rose by \$1.20 to \$27.80 by the close of trading June 30, for a 4.5 per cent one-day gain.

First Air initially teamed up with Cargojet in June 2014, when First Air turned over the remaining portion of its lease on a Boeing 767-200 freighter to Cargojet.

Cargojet still uses that aircraft to ship freight from Winnipeg to Iqaluit for clients like the North West Co.

[First Air has also unloaded its two C-130 Hercules aircraft](#), which at one time were the only privately-owned commercial Herks in Canada.

In 2013, Arctic Co-ops Ltd. had made its own deal with Cargojet to [ship freight out of Winnipeg in partnership with Canadian North and Calm Air](#).

Cargojet says its deal with First Air now gives them access to all of Canada.

“We are excited to expand service to the entire Canadian domestic market, including key communities in Northern Canada,” Ajay K. Virmani, the president and CEO of Cargojet, said in the news release.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit-owned-arctic-airline-signs-10-year-freight-deal-with-cargojet/>

## **Aboriginal Community Development**

### **First Nations seek role in widening Highway 69**

By [Jim Moodie](#), The Sudbury Star

Friday, June 26, 2015 1:54:20 EDT AM



Three First Nations south of Sudbury are joining forces to seek a role in the expansion of Highway 69 through their communities.

This week, Shawanaga, Magnetawan and Henvey Inlet announced they formed a limited partnership through a new corporation titled Shwe Mikan Corp., with the goal of providing materials and manpower in the four-laning of the north-south artery.

"What it does is it allows us to work with the Ministry of Transportation and probably work within the perimeters of a contract they put out," said Wayne Pamajewon, chief of Shawanaga First Nation.

The reserves may not be in a position to provide the full range of equipment and expertise for highway projects, but can do some subcontracting and also partner with an established larger contractor.

"We don't have the capacity ourselves," said Pamajewon. "We have to build capacity, and that's what we're working towards."

The chief said there are also "spinoff services" that the First Nations could provide. "It might be fuel, for example," he said. "Or there could be other materials we could supply, maybe even catering trucks."

Aggregate is always needed in such projects, and Pamajewon said there are opportunities for the Shwe Mikan Corp. to "look at gravel pits" on their lands.

He said the Magnetawan First Nation has a potential quarry site, and other quarries in the area are located on traditional and treaty territories.

"It's all about getting involved and generating capacity," he said. "Our people might want to drive trucks for somebody or they might have heavy equipment abilities."

He said the fledgling company "may not be ready for the one contract that's coming out soon," but it will aim to bid on the next one.

Pamajewon said the initiative has grown out of earlier dealings with the Transportation ministry on Highway 69 issues.

"We've been working pretty good with the MTO, and that's how this came about," he said.

Pamajewon used the example of a new bridge accessing Highway 522, at the Grundy Lake Provincial Park turnoff, which utilizes lands Henvey Inlet claims as traditional territory.

"We didn't want to hold it up," he said. "We wanted to help out in some way, so the agreement was that we would have some cash given to us so that we can attempt to build some capacity within our communities."

He said the First Nations also worked with the MTO on a pilot project at the Carling quarry.

"We worked with Miller Paving on that, and Magnetawan took the lead on it," he said. "At the end of the day, we ended up with a little bit of money in our pockets and some jobs were created out of it. So that kind of kick-started it and we started to talk about procurement in general."

While the First Nations are positioning themselves to get a share of the short-term economic boost that comes from the highway construction, Pamajewon said they are also thinking longer term.

"After the highway is built, I don't see it being all over for the First Nations," he said. "If we can build capacity, that will allow us to look at taking care of that highway after, putting in a tender to maintain it."

The chief said there may be band members poised to graduate as engineers, and others newly licensed as equipment operators, who would be keen to work on a project close to their home communities.

"We haven't reached out yet," he said. "That work needs to be done, and I think we're moving very quickly on that now. We're not just starting out fresh; we have some thoughts on how we're going to achieve this."

A ceremony to mark the partnership agreement was to be held Thursday at the Shawanaga First Nation.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thesudburystar.com/2015/06/26/first-nations-seek-role-in-widening-highway-69>

## **Nanaimo council approves housing for urban aboriginals**



by [Tamara Cunningham - Nanaimo News Bulletin](#)

posted Jun 28, 2015 at 1:00 PM

New affordable housing for aboriginal students hinges on dollars once promised to Nanaimo's housing strategy for the homeless and mentally ill.

The non-profit Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre has won political support to build a three-storey apartment complex on city-owned property to house aboriginal university students and their families, as well as those at risk of homelessness.

The Bowen Road site was supposed to be the home of a supportive housing complex for the city's homeless and one of five agreed to in a memorandum of understanding with the province. It was put on hold, however, in 2011 after residents expressed concern in public hearings.

Now the province claims money once set aside for a project at 1406 Bowen Rd. has been reallocated and is no longer available, a city report says, and B.C. Housing notes that it doesn't typically pay for the development of student housing.

The new use for the land, agreed to along with the need for a new affordable housing strategy by council, isn't tied to the Nanaimo Response to Homelessness Action Plan, nor addresses the fact that two supportive housing complexes for the homeless are now full with wait lists.

But Chris Beaton, executive director for the Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre, says it meets a critical need for urban aboriginal housing. Of 2,100 aboriginal students enrolled at Vancouver Island University, 54 per cent indicated affordable housing was a challenge to find.

Beaton is seeking a 60-year lease from the city at a nominal fee, property tax exemption and contributions for development cost charges, as well as help from the city to pursue money once promised for the site in a 2008 MOU with the B.C. government.

The project has the ability to be self-sustaining but hinges on provincial dollars to construct the facility. The cost to build is estimated at \$5.6 million.

"The city lived up to its commitment and invested dollars onto that site, to purchase the site, to service the site, to provide an access lane and now the province is saying 'well, we've reallocated funds,' he said. "My point I made to council [Monday] night ... was let's go in partnership and say no, you've made a commitment in this MOU, this active MOU, we want to move forward."

Nanaimo city council agreed Monday after receiving the project's feasibility report to make Bowen Road available and prepare an affordable housing strategy at the same time.

The strategy would look at the housing needs of vulnerable populations, including lone parents and elderly renters, and possible locations for affordable housing.

The last time the city did a study like this it spurred the supportive-housing project, according to John Horn, the city's social planner.

Work on the strategy is expected to get underway this September.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.nanaimobulletin.com/news/309630201.html>

## **St. Eustache resident to get Order of Manitoba**

By [Svjetlana Mlinarevic](#), The Graphic

Thursday, June 25, 2015 11:05:59 CDT AM



Karen Beaudin will receive the Order of Manitona on July 9, 2015. (Submitted Photo)

A St. Eustache native has received the highest honour a Manitoban can get from the province and it's all because she cared.

Karen Beaudin, 56, has been awarded the Order of Manitoba and will receive her honour from the lieutenant governor on July 9.

"I was quite honoured. I was surprised to get the call. It's quite humbling and I'm very honoured to receive that award. It's nice to be recognized for the work I do, although I'm not the type of person who needs that recognition," said Beaudin.

Beaudin, a community resource co-ordinator for the City of Winnipeg, is receiving her award for increasing support, understanding, and respect for indigenous people in the workforce.

Holding three degrees and two certificates, Beaudin has worked as a community development worker working in Winnipeg's inner city and as an outreach worker in the aboriginal community in regards to employment. Now, she's a community resource co-ordinator covering the downtown and Elmwood areas to foster community development and provide support.

"It's the kind of work I like to do. Working with people and trying to make things happen for different groups and people in the city," said Beaudin, adding that as a Metis her passion lies in helping First Nations people.

"Being Metis, you just want to get people more involved and see the opportunities that are out there and encourage them to stay in school and go on to post-secondary. There are opportunities out there."

In 2002, she created the city's aboriginal employee group and served as its spokesperson. The intent of the group was to provide aboriginal employees with program supports and information about training, education, and scholarship opportunities and it also dispelled any negative stereotypes about the aboriginal community among co-workers.

"I think it has broken down a few barriers, but there's always lots of work to do I think in regards to stereotypes," she said.

Beaudin has also sat on the Metis Child, Family and Community Services Board and has co-chaired the Seven Oaks Parents in Support of Aboriginal Education initiative for Seven Oaks School Board, which provides after-school programming for youth. She currently sits as vice-chair of the Ikwe Widdjiitwin Inc., an aboriginal women and children's crisis shelter.

She also is a foster parent, something she has always wanted for herself and came into fortuitously 18 years ago while teaching square dancing at Lord Selkirk Park Community Centre. She said there was a little boy who used to come to the community centre all the time to practice his dancing until one day he didn't. Beaudin became concerned and asked around as to his whereabouts and was told he was apprehended by Child and Family Services. One day, the boy showed up back at the centre having run away from his placement at a hotel. Beaudin decided to take him in as a foster parent with the condition that the boy promised to go to school.

"That's how it started," she said.

It was because of Beaudin's never-ending drive to make Winnipeg a better place that co-worker Carole Frechette nominated her for the Order of Manitoba.

“She’s an inspiration to others.... When I first met Karen and she was working as a community development worker...I watched how giving she was and so helpful. She really does make someone’s life better because of how much she cares... where others would have given up on them and not given them anytime, she will go out of her way to help them,” said Frechette.

“I think it’s important to give back to the community and not expect anything in return,” said Beaudin. “Do it from your heart and with an attempt to make things better.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.portagedailygraphic.com/2015/06/25/st-eustache-resident-to-get-order-of-manitoba>

## Last Nail ceremony a homecoming for Metis elder

By [Kevin Rushworth](#), High River Times

Tuesday, June 30, 2015 11:47:53 MDT AM



Joan Tornberg, a Metis elder, blesses World Renew volunteers during the smudge ceremony, which was held as part of World Renew’s Last Nail ceremony. After months of restoration work, Tornberg has been able to return home after the flooding ravaged her house in 2013.

By Kevin Rushworth

MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

A feeling of immense joy was palpable as Joan Tornberg, 75, welcomed World Renew volunteers, those of whom worked tirelessly on her flood-ravaged home, back for the Last Nail house dedication.

Two years after the flood, the ceremony on June 25 was an official homecoming for Tornberg, a Metis elder, and celebrated recovery, strength of spirit and perseverance.

“There are no words to express the way I feel today,” she said. “There are just no words. I am just overjoyed when I look at you people and that’s all that really matters is that Jesus is among us.”

As part of her faith and culture, a smudging ceremony also took place and guests were asked to pray for others while being blessed. The day offered moments to recall Tornberg’s road to recovery.

After the flood destroyed her home, this was also a period when she was battling cancer, a fight she has since won. Her healing process had her away from home for eight months.

“When I first came back after my operation, I just stood in wonder and thought, ‘Will I ever get home?’” she told the High River Times, remembering the mud and filth that had previously coated everything.

In the fall of 2014, Tornberg worked in her garden while her house remained unlivable. Unsure how to move forward, she started by contacting the Canadian Red Cross.

“The people there were just astounding,” she recalled. “They were so wonderful. There was no animosity, it was just ‘We want to help you,’ and they did.”

Red Cross representatives collaborated with numerous agencies, one of which was World Renew Disaster Response Services. A funding package was created to assist Tornberg in her return home.

After receiving Disaster Recovery Program (DRP) assistance to restore her basement, the NGO’s volunteers began reconstruction efforts in her home this past March.

Now having been home for about three weeks, Tornberg had previously lived on her second floor while construction volunteers completed the finishing touches downstairs.

All she had during that time was a microwave oven, a coffee pot and a bed, she recalled.

“I was just glad to be here,” she said. “I just enjoyed being around the volunteers so much. They’re such beautiful people.”

Stephen Deunk, case manager with World Renew, said Tornberg had a vision for what she wanted her restored home to look like. Volunteers almost had to keep up with her, he added with a laugh.

“Joan is special to me,” Deunk said. “She’s determined, she’s resilient and like she said, ‘If there’s a will, there’s a way,’ and I had to smile, because that is so accurate to my experience working with her.”

The same feelings for Tornberg were felt by the volunteers themselves, according to Doug Guikema, who worked as site manager during the reconstruction.

“One of the couples who worked in here previously came just for the Last Nail, because of their appreciation and respect for her,” he said, adding the team members adored her.

The smudging ceremony, according to Tornberg, had been something she had been excited about since she learned about the Last Nail ceremony.

“What excited me the most was because they were excited about it,” she said. “The smudge, the sage and the sweetgrass I burnt today, we believe in our culture it’s a cleansing.”

Even though so much wrong has occurred to her recently, Tornberg noted her faith has lifted her through the trying times. God, she said, has been walking with her and other people require her prayers.

Having returned home, thanks to World Renew and other support agencies’ assistance, Tornberg shared her message with those still recovering from the disaster.

“Have faith and just don’t ever give up,” she said, noting that residents have to keep walking the walk and their recovery will progress as well. “Do whatever you have to do, but don’t ever give up.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.highrivertimes.com/2015/06/30/last-nail-ceremony-a-homecoming-for-metis-elder>

## **First Nations University offers reward for return of teepee**

**Ceremonial teepee fell out of truck en route to provide sweats for northern wildfire evacuees**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jul 02, 2015 10:54 AM CT Last Updated: Jul 02, 2015 10:54 AM CT



The teepee went missing from the back of a truck on July 1 near Broad Street in Regina. (First Nations University of Canada)

First Nations University of Canada is looking for its ceremonial teepee after it fell out of the back of a truck in Regina.

The teepee was being transported by an elder's helper when it was dropped from the truck somewhere on Broad Street Wednesday.

"Our elder's helper was travelling from the north end back over to our campus. And en route he realized that, unfortunately, in all his rush, his tailgate was down. And our beautiful canvas slid out the back," said Racelle Kooy, the university's director of communications.



This is the ceremonial teepee that staff at First Nations University of Canada are missing. They are offering a reward for its return. (First Nations University of Canada)

FNUC shares a campus with the University of Regina, which is currently housing people from communities in northern Saskatchewan that are under threat from wildfires.

"We're absolutely beside ourselves, as we use the teepee all the time," said Kooy. "In fact, he was bringing it here to put up so we could use for the sweats that we'll be offering to evacuees over the course of the number of days."

Kooy says the tent is in a canvas bag and has a First Nations University logo on the side of it. She's asking anyone who spots it to please contact the University by phone, Facebook, or Twitter. She says a reward is being offered.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/first-nations-university-offers-reward-for-return-of-teepee-1.3135618>



# Canada Day celebrations take on different meanings for First Nations groups

By D.C. Fraser, Leader-Post July 2, 2015



A man walks past a flag and other items memorializing murdered and missing persons on the Albert Street Bridge in Regina on Wednesday July 1, 2015.

Shayleen Goforth spent her Canada Day standing on the Albert Street Bridge.

Cars drove by; some of them honked. People walked by; most wore red and white.

Goforth just stood there, holding a homemade poster with a young woman's face on it. The photo is of Goforth's sister, Kelly, who was found murdered in 2013.

Dianne Big Eagle is on the bridge with Goforth. There's about 30 here in total. Big Eagle is still looking for her daughter Danita. She has been looking since 2007, when Danita went missing in February of that year.

"It's supposed to be Canada Day, but we're using this day to remember our missing and murdered indigenous women all across Canada," said Big Eagle. "There (are) a lot of people out here. We're putting ourselves right in the centre of everything."

There is more mourning going on here than celebration, but a few hundred steps away the Canada Day revelries are in full swing at Wascana Centre.

In Australia, many indigenous groups protest Australia Day. Instead they refer to it as "Invasion Day".

Shauneen Pete, an education professor at the University of Regina, finds that inspiring.

She's spending time with her dog and preparing to teach an upcoming course on this July 1. "I have really conflicted thoughts on Canada Day, that's for sure," she said. "Certainly, it's not a day that I participate in."

Pete says a long-term denial of the oppression of indigenous people has been problematic, and more recently, she takes issue with the federal government's lack of response to the Truth and Reconciliation commission, which examined the residential-school system.

All reasons for her not to spend Canada Day watching fireworks.

"My decision not to participate in Canada Day events is one of resistance," she said. "Every day is an opportunity to learn the truths of Canada's past."

Pete does not know if she is the only one who doesn't take part in Canada Day festivities.

"I'm not so sure it's a universally shared idea," she said, adding many aboriginals enjoy the day off and like watching the fireworks.

"We demonstrate our resistance in lots of other ways," she said, mentioning Idle No More protests as a recent example.

Still, she knows she isn't the only one staying away from the red and white celebrations.

"There are lots of people out there who just go about their day doing something entirely different," she said.

Goforth, for her part, just wanted to spend the day supporting the families of all the people missing and murdered in Canada.

Standing on the bridge as cars drove by is more to raise awareness than to protest against Canada Day.

"We have to be heard," Goforth said. "It's not an issue for most people, until it happens to them."

For her, the day - and holding the sign on the bridge - has its own special meaning to her.

"My sister loved Canada day," said Goforth.

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.leaderpost.com/life/Canada+celebrations+take+different+meanings+First+Nations+groups/11181719/story.html>

# Celebrating Canada, from its first people to its newest

[Emma McIntosh, Calgary Herald](#)

Published on: July 1, 2015 | Last Updated: July 1, 2015 7:36 PM MDT

Every single dance Blake Yellowhorn performs is unique, including the one he has just done for the audience gathered on Prince's Island for a Canada Day powwow. Each time is based on the same steps, but he says it branches off into a different direction every time.

"Everything I do comes from my heart," the 23-year-old Blackfoot aboriginal from the Piikani Nation said.

"When I feel the beat, it's like a trance in a way. It comes over my body and it just moves me."

Crowds formed eagerly around him, vying for a photo. It's not hard to see why — his regalia, entirely handmade by his father and stepmother, is magnificent. Its brightly-coloured fringe and intricately arranged feathers swayed with Yellowhorn as he danced, perfectly in step with the heartbeat-like rhythm of the drums.



Blake Yellowhorn, a First Nations dancer, performs during a powwow on Prince's Island on Canada Day 2015. Gavin Young / Calgary Herald

Following the [NDP government's apology](#) for the legacy inflicted by residential schools in June, Yellowhorn says this Canada Day feels different — like a celebration of that [expression of regret](#).

"With all that assimilation and the residential schools that we went through, where they tried to take away our language, it's unbelievable that we're still standing here to this day and still celebrating our heritage," he said.

For Cree masters students and hoop dancer Sandra Lamouche, the powwow was part of the process of moving forward.

“I think it’s a time of reconciliation and a time of healing,” she said. “A big part of healing is dance, because dance was actually outlawed during the era of residential schools. I always try to remain positive, and that’s something our elders teach us.”

The powwow, organized by the City of Calgary and the Iniikokaan Aboriginal Centre at Bow Valley College, featured activities all around Prince’s Island Park to celebrate Aboriginal culture. Beyond the dancing, the event featured language lessons and an artisan market.

Across the city in Heritage Park, 75 new Canadians from 27 different countries received their citizenship on the nation’s birthday. The ceremony saw speeches from Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi, who told his own family’s immigration story, and Michelle Rempel, MP for Calgary-Centre and Minister of State, who advised the new Canadians to stand up for their freedoms.



The Olabiyi family gathers together after receiving their Canadian citizenship in a Canada Day ceremony at Heritage Park. Gavin Young / Calgary Herald

The words hit home for Olayemi Olabiyi, who came to Canada from Nigeria seven years ago and became a citizen with her husband, William, and their three young children. She says they moved in search of better lives.

“We are so happy to be here,” she said. “We have never had any moments of regret.”

Diane and Dan Pearson, English immigrants, have lived in Calgary for eight years. They say they came seeking opportunities for their sons, 15-year-old Ethan and 18-year-old Oliver.

After taking his oath, Oliver said the moment was special.

“Since we moved here, I’ve done more things than people who’ve lived until they’re 50 have in England,” he said.

Meanwhile, the space emptied as families ventured outside for their first celebration as Canadians.

**Direct Link:** <http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/celebrating-canada-from-its-first-people-to-its-newest>

## Shoal Lake First Nations Kickstarter Campaign Aims To Build Road That Feds Won't

CP | By The Canadian Press

Posted: 06/30/2015 11:24 am EDT Updated: 06/30/2015 11:59 am EDT



A boy from the Shoal Lake 40 First Nation sits on a bridge over a man-made channel made to support Winnipeg's water system which has cut them off from the mainland on Thursday, June 25, 2015. | CP

**THE CANADIAN PRESS** 🇨🇦

WINNIPEG - A kickstarter campaign is underway to pay Ottawa's portion of an all-weather road for a reserve under one of the longest boil-water advisories in Canada.

The fundraising campaign began Monday and has already raised \$11,000.

Organizer Rick Harp is hoping to raise \$10 million to pay the federal government's share of a permanent road for Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.

The reserve, which straddles the Ontario-Manitoba boundary, was cut off from the mainland a century ago to build an aqueduct which supplies Winnipeg with fresh water.



Residents were left in tears last week when a federal cabinet minister visited the reserve, but refused to commit to seeing a road built.

Harp says the fundraiser is a way for people — especially those who have enjoyed the reserve's water for a century —to show their support for the First Nation and let the federal government know how they feel.

**Direct Link:** [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/06/30/kickstarter-campaign-launched-to-pay-ottawa-s-portion-of-road-for-reserve\\_n\\_7696708.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/06/30/kickstarter-campaign-launched-to-pay-ottawa-s-portion-of-road-for-reserve_n_7696708.html)

## **Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement**

### **Aboriginal community reaches 'historic' agreement with Montreal police**

**Officers will learn about indigenous culture and history as part of new training**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 25, 2015 6:00 AM ET Last Updated: Jun 25, 2015 11:18 PM ET



Chief Marc Parent and Nakuset, co-chair of the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network, pose for a photo after signing an agreement on Thursday. (Radio-Canada)

Montreal police have committed to new training and a protocol to handle cases of missing and murdered indigenous women under a landmark agreement signed today with the city's aboriginal community.

The agreement will establish new training for police officers and teach them about aboriginal culture and history.

It will also create a protocol to improve prevention and response to cases of missing and murdered indigenous women.

Police chief Marc Parent said he's hopeful the agreement will help build trust between officers and First Nations and Inuit people.

"The missing person issue is a big one in Montreal," Parent said in an interview following Thursday's announcement.

"We want to work together to address this situation."



Nakuset, co-chair of the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network, says cultural training will help police better do their jobs. (Radio-Canada)

The agreement comes after months of work by the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network.

"There's very few other cities who have done this, and those that have done it were put together by the police" Nakuset, the co-chair of the network and the executive director of the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal, told CBC.

"This is the first time where the Montreal urban aboriginal community has met with the police, created something, and they're accepting it."

Nakuset said the cultural training in particular will help police work more effectively with the aboriginal community.

"Learning the history is going to bring a lot of empathy and a better understanding of what we've been through," she said.

She added that the protocol established under this agreement could be used as a blueprint for other cities.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/aboriginal-community-reaches-historic-agreement-with-montreal-police-1.3126705>



# Aboriginal inmates less likely to get early release from prison

**'Releasing someone at the end of their sentence does not make a safe community,' John Howard spokeswoman says**

By Kate Kyle, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 25, 2015 6:30 AM CT Last Updated: Jun 25, 2015 9:43 AM CT



Nearly 85 per cent of aboriginal offenders are detained in federal prisons until they have served two-thirds of their sentences, at which time most offenders are entitled to statutory release, compared to 69 per cent of non-aboriginal offenders, federal statistics indicate. (iStock photo)

Aboriginal prisoners are overrepresented in Canada's federal prisons and waiting longer for parole, according to new numbers from the Public Safety Ministry, which is responsible for corrections.

Federal offenders are first eligible for parole after serving one-third of their sentences, but their release isn't guaranteed.

However, according to the [2014 Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview](#), nearly 85 per cent of aboriginal offenders are detained in federal prisons until they have served two-thirds of their sentences, at which time most offenders are entitled to statutory release, compared to 69 per cent of non-aboriginal offenders.

Struggles to secure housing, an inmate's criminal record and high caseloads for legal aid lawyers all contribute to longer wait times for release of aboriginal inmates in federal prisons, says Lydia Bardak of the John Howard Society in Yellowknife.

"Statistically, aboriginal offenders are more likely to go right to the end of their sentence date, which is something we don't want to see," said Bardak.

"Releasing someone at the end of their sentence does not make a safe community."

## **Housing a problem**

Bardak said the closer inmates come to serving their full sentences, the more likely they are to have a higher "rate of reoffending," because they aren't given the opportunity to practise what they have learned in rehabilitation programs.

Bardak said many northern offenders serving federal time in the south also struggle to secure safe housing close to a parole officer.

"We don't exactly have [a transition home] here in Yellowknife, but there are four beds dedicated at Bailey House for federal corrections releases. There's just the one parole officer here in Yellowknife."

The report also notes the aboriginal population in federal prisons continues to grow.

The total aboriginal inmate population increased by 40 per cent in 2004-5 and 2013-14. While aboriginal people make up three per cent of Canada's adult population, they made up 23.1 per cent of the in-custody population and 16.8 per cent of offenders on community supervision in 2013-14.

The report also found aboriginal inmates entered the federal corrections system at a younger age than non-aboriginal offenders.

## **TRC recommendations**

In its final report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for governments to eliminate the overrepresentation of aboriginal people in custody over the next 10 years.

TRC commissioner Marie Wilson heard from thousands of former residential school students, including offenders.

"The hardest transition they had to make in their life was going from residential school back to their community," she says.

"The easiest they had to make was going from residential school to the criminal justice system. "

The TRC calls to action include 17 recommendations related to justice, such as:

- Creating more programs and services for offenders with FASD;
- Calling on all levels of government to work with aboriginal communities to provide culturally-relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence, and overcoming the experience of having been sexually abused;

- Making sure lawyers receive training about the legacy of residential schools, aboriginal rights and indigenous law.

Jeremy Laurin, a spokesman for the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, said in an email: "Our Conservative government believes that criminals belong behind bars.

"Conditional release is not a right, it must be earned. Offenders have access to correctional programming that addresses their criminality."

Province/Territory	Number of aboriginal offenders in federal prison (percentage of all offenders)
NL	12 (10)
PEI	0 (0)
NS	88 (10)
NB	157 (12)
Quebec	632 (11)
Ontario	692 (12)
Manitoba	622 (54)
Saskatchewan	868 (61)
Alberta	1003 (32)
BC	924 (27)
Yukon	4 (44)
NWT	10 (100)
Nunavut	4 (100)

Source: Correctional Service of Canada

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/aboriginal-inmates-less-likely-to-get-early-release-from-prison-1.3126674>

## Toronto Police aboriginal liaison officers build bridges with community

By [Chris Doucette](#), *Toronto Sun*

First posted: Saturday, June 27, 2015 06:33 PM EDT | Updated: Sunday, June 28, 2015 11:01 AM EDT

TORONTO - Building bridges with Toronto's aboriginal community is a job for a Toronto Police officer such as Const. Michael Jeffrey

"Certainly the walls have been coming down," the veteran cop, an aboriginal liaison officer working in 51 Division, tells the Toronto Sun on a recent ride-along. "It comes down to respect, that's where it starts. If you are respectful to them, they're usually respectful back."

Being Native himself also helps him to connect with the Aboriginal community, he said.

Jeffrey's mother was from Kenesatake, a Mohawk settlement near Oka, Quebec — the site of the 1992 Oka crisis.

But Jeffrey knew little about his culture growing up. It wasn't until adulthood that he began embracing his roots, giving him an identity, he said.

Jeffrey decided to become a police officer 13 years ago after working in Victim Services Toronto as a civilian. The married father of two teen boys was assigned to 51 Division 11 years ago.

"I knew immediately I wanted to work with the aboriginal community," Jeffrey said.

It's 10 a.m. and the streets of the city's most active police division are bustling with a wide diversity of people — professionals off to work, cyclists, nannies pushing strollers, seniors out for a walk, disabled people on scooters, prostitutes out on the prowl and addicts looking for a fix.

Jeffrey has his first encounters of the day with some native people in Allan Gardens.

He chats briefly with an older native women reading on a park bench, then turns his attention to several aboriginal men at the next bench.

One has a bottle of beer tucked behind his back as he sits, the other is standing with one arm tucked against his side preventing the bottle in his jacket from dropping.

But rather than write tickets for drinking in public, he jokes with the men.

"They're enjoying a beer on a sunny day, probably because they stay at a nearby shelter," Jeffrey explains later. "And they're not causing any trouble."

He knows positive encounters may pay off later — perhaps in the form of information.

Jeffrey stops often to chat with people, all of whom know him.

Many even address him as "Shakes," a nickname given to him by his colleagues because he's constantly on the move.

Later he bumps into Const. Jeff Wesley, another of 51 Division's five Aboriginal liaison officers, as he and his partner bike through the neighbourhood.

"I was a little mischievous growing up," said Wesley, a Chapleau Cree from Moosonee.

He got into some trouble in his youth and met an OPP officer who had a profound impact on him.

"His uniform really impressed me and made me want to be a cop," Wesley remembers.

After serving as the lone officer on an isolated Northern Ontario reserve, Angling Lake, he joined Toronto Police 15 years ago.

"It was pretty extreme up there at times, but I met lots of good people as well," Wesley said.

Jeffrey's next stop, Anishnawbe Health Toronto, is one of the several places downtown with services for native people.

He pops in to talk to a youth counsellor he's been working with to help some aboriginal youth apply to the service's Youth in Policing initiative.

"Like any community, if we can reach people when they're young we can make a real difference," he said, adding for most of the kids the YIPI program is their first job experience.

"For me, working with these kids really offsets the negative stuff we deal with in policing every day," he said.

About 85,000 First Nations peoples reside in Toronto, most downtown where an abundance services are located — services that provide housing, health care, job training and employment, among other things.

"There are far more services available here than on a reserve, where it can be tough just to get clean drinking water," Jeffrey said. "It's just a matter of getting people to access those services."

\*\*\*\*\*

Michael Cuthbert is living proof that it's never too late to turn your life around.

The 45-year-old says he spent a good chunk of his life living on the streets of Toronto or locked behind bars, addicted to drugs, committing crimes to support his habit and despising cops.

But two years ago he had “an awakening,” began utilizing the many services offered to aboriginals in the city and hasn’t looked back.

“I was offered a chance at rehabilitation, so I took it,” Cuthbert said recently. “And once you stop bucking the system, good things can happen.”

Prior to turning his life around, Cuthbert was “a mess.”

“I was emaciated, weighed 140 pounds and my teeth were falling out,” he recalled.

He also believed talking to police — even those who tried to help him throughout his life — made you a snitch.

“They were the bad guys and we were the good guys,” Cuthbert said with a laugh. “But once I began to accept I was in trouble because of my own wrongdoing, I started to realize cops are not the bad guys.”

Cuthbert stopped using drugs and alcohol, started learning about his native culture and began spending his days at Anishnawbe Health Toronto, tapping into the many resources offered there.

“The more I immersed myself in my community, the better my life got,” he said, adding he plans to take a course in the fall and become an Aboriginal health worker so he can help others.

He has even begun to trust police.

“There are officers who genuinely care about the community and want to help,” he said. “I feel like I’ve built a bond and a friendship with some of them.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/06/27/toronto-police-aboriginal-liaison-officers-build-bridges-with-community>

## **Aboriginal Education & Youth**

### **Documentary puts aboriginal education in spotlight**

Samantha WRIGHT ALLEN / Prince George Citizen  
June 24, 2015 09:07 PM



Shelly Niemi, District 57's Aboriginal Education Department Manager, at Monday's private screening of the documentary *Crow Brings A Message*. - Citizen photo Samantha Wright Allen

A new documentary about aboriginal education in School District 57 places Prince George and its surrounding communities as an example for the rest of the country.

It's a story about the challenges that face aboriginal learners, the work being done to address a shocking graduation gap and the hope district workers have that their work is making a difference.

*Crow Brings A Message* is a production of the district's aboriginal education department and reflects the work that it has done over the last five years.

"That was an act of love," aboriginal education manager Shelly Niemi told the audience. It aired at a private showing Monday night at UNCBC's Canfor Theatre and will be made public in the fall.

"We believe this documentary shows locally, provincially, nationally what aboriginal excellence looks like."

When Niemi took on her role five years ago, the department had 32 staff.

Today, that number sits at just over 100.

It's not a shift in budget that brought that change - provincial funding is tied to the number of self-identified aboriginal students in school - but a change of focus to human resources.

Niemi said she thinks Prince George can be a model for other districts, but recognizes the graduation gap remains large.

This district has almost 3,300 self-identified aboriginal students representing almost a third of the population.

Last year, the aboriginal graduation rate was 48.8 per cent compared to 81 per cent of non-aboriginal students.



"We're going to get there. I know it," said Niemi, who spoke of the "inherent right" of aboriginal students to education and one that builds off the success of elders.

The video featured interviews, led by an aboriginal student, with principals, teachers, elders, superintendent Brian Pepper and more. It also featured the story of Victoria Alexander, a Prince George secondary school graduate.

Her education journey has been a challenging one, she told the cameras, but when she started a land-based education program that all changed.

"We need to be equals," she said, and places like the aboriginal-focused Eagle Centre at PGSS helped her realize she deserved to be there and could graduate.

"I know that my siblings will too," Alexander said.

Niemi also speaks from that experience. She relayed to the audience how she bounced from school to school and never felt she could "walk with spirit and ceremony in the hallways."

"I believe schools are starting to create the space and give permission for that to occur," said Niemi.

Now she is completing a Masters degree and plans to pursue a PhD as well.

She spoke of cultural safety and having trauma-informed classes that understand times of transition between grades - and even homes - are when students are most vulnerable.

Last week the province announced it would devote one professional development day next year to aboriginal education for teachers - a move Niemi said was a positive step.

"We do that every day," she said, also referencing a five-part "culture 101" training series open to all teachers in the district.

In the documentary superintendent Brian Pepper spoke of making learning relevant to all aboriginal students.

"We have to change as individual teachers."

Canada's residential schools, Pepper said, was a "system (that) robbed students of culture and language."

That sentiment was echoed by one elder who spoke of his time at a residential school.

"It was more indoctrination, brainwashing us to not be who we are."

The documentary touched on themes of decolonizing education, education equity and cultural integration.

Ultimately, Niemi credited collaboration and partnerships for transforming the system, one where the aboriginal education department works seamlessly within schools rather than its own silo - something she said they're already doing.

"We're going to do it together."

- See more at: <http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/documentary-puts-aboriginal-education-in-spotlight-1.1979058#sthash.Gp6X39yg.dpuf>

## Aboriginal kids in care: 4 approaches to improve Canada's track record

**A look at what programs are working in a system that isn't**

By Nikki Wiart, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 27, 2015 7:00 AM ET Last Updated: Jun 27, 2015 6:01 PM ET



Cory Gregorashuk (left) stands with Sue Mozdzen (right). Mozdzen said the CLOUT model is the best way of re-parenting the parents. (Nikki Wiart/CBC)

The consensus among experts in social services is this: Canada's current child-in-care system is deeply flawed.

There were nearly 30,000 children in care across the country in 2011, according to Statistics Canada, and nearly 50 per cent of those were aboriginal.

In provinces like Manitoba, that over-representation is even more apparent. Out of the over 10,000 children currently in care in the province, nearly 90 per cent are aboriginal.

Here is a look at four programs that are showing success in a system criticized for its failures.

# 1. Move the parents, not children

The Misipawistik Cree Nation, five hours north of Winnipeg, passed a resolution in March that gave the council the ability to remove the parents, instead of the children, when intervention was required, stating:

"The disruption and trauma felt by children who may be removed from their homes ... is not an acceptable outcome to a situation where the child has done nothing wrong."

Trained agency workers care for the children inside their homes, while the parents get the help they need so the family can eventually be reunified.

It's a system that has only one predecessor in Canada. The Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, about 10 hours north of Winnipeg, implemented a similar model in 2002.

---

## Challenges:

On reserve, all properties are community-owned, meaning it is within a council's legal right to forcibly remove parents from their home. If this system was to be implemented off reserve, parents would have to leave voluntarily.

---

# 2. Reunite with extra support

A program in Edmonton is allowing parents and children in care to live under the same roof, with round-the-clock supervision, until they are ready to be introduced back into the community.

"I think the parents or the parent should be given a second chance to have their children in their own care," said Lizette Gaudry, the director of the Métis Housing Corporation's Family Reunification Program.

Families pay rent and buy their own groceries, but have the constant support of trained staff, who work directly with the parents, and a child and family services caseworker, to build a personalized case plan.

Since it began in September of 2013, all of the families that have gone through the program have successfully transitioned back into the community.

---

## Challenges

Gaudry said a program like this has a lot of start-up costs, and can't work without the proper funding. There also needs to be staff with experience in working with human services, and who understand the complexities of the program and the clients.

---

### **3. Re-parent the parents**

Sue Mozdzen, program coordinator, said in her 20 years of experience, CLOUT (Community Led Organizations United Together) is the closest thing she's seen to be actually putting birth parents and children in the same foster home.



CLOUT foster mom Michelle Berard teaches parenting skills. (Nikki Wiart/CBC)

CLOUT brings birth parents, foster parents, and CFS caseworkers together with the goal of reunification. Through that process, birth parents are able to build lasting relationships with the foster parents housing their children.

"This model is the best way of re-parenting the parents," said Mozdzen.

In the past three years, CLOUT has reported a 70 per cent success rate in reunifying families.

The program is small, with just eight foster homes housing a total of 22 beds. It's also short-term, with children being fostered for six-to-12 months.

---

### **Challenges**

CLOUT is an offshoot of the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and is successful because of the deeply entrenched relationships the centre has created with Winnipeg's aboriginal community.

"You could write down the CLOUT model on a piece of paper, but if you don't have the flexibility, the creativity, and the ability to work with people the way we have been given the ability to do, the model doesn't mean anything."

---

## **4. Ask the children what they want**

The Feathers of Hope (FOH) initiative in Ontario is allowing aboriginal youth to work on an even playing field with adults, and add their voice to issues facing the aboriginal community.



Samantha Crowe, one of the youth amplifiers for Feathers of Hope, said all levels of government need to engage in what the initiative is doing so the young people who lent their voices to the report aren't left hanging. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/Sean Kilpatrick)

In May, FOH held a forum specifically on the issue of child welfare. Hundreds of aboriginal youth met with representatives from all levels of government, shared their experiences with the child-in-care system, and offered ideas on how to improve it.

"These are the young people that are dealing with the issues themselves right now," said Samantha Crowe, a youth worker with FOH.

"They don't want to be just another number; they don't want to be a case file. They are wanting to make that change to have a better future for themselves, and for any other young people who may be going into the system."

---

## **Challenges**

Irwin Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth in Ontario, said for initiatives similar to FOH to work on a larger scale, community leaders need to form relationships with aboriginal youth and let them have a voice.

"It takes the willingness to listen," he said. "It takes decision-makers to say, 'We want to listen; this is a way to helping us get unstuck.'"

---

## **Before anything else, intervention**

The above approaches focus on improving the system after the children have already been apprehended. But experts agree if there was adequate funding and resources to address the root of the problem, rather than waiting for a problem to present itself, those programs wouldn't be needed.

"The default remains the removal of children from the community, even where there's no protection concern other than their need for resources," said Katherine Hensel, an aboriginal lawyer and head of Hensel Barristers in Toronto.

"There are other far more healthy and effective interventions that can be done within the home and within the family if you dedicate sufficient resources and intelligence and rigour to it."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/aboriginal-kids-in-care-4-approaches-to-improve-canada-s-track-record-1.3129189>

## **Early intervention could prevent CFS apprehensions, Winnipeg mom says**

**Prevention needed, not 'Band-Aid approaches,' according to First Nations family advocate**

By Nikki Wiart, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 28, 2015 7:00 AM ET Last Updated: Jun 28, 2015 12:01 PM ET



Cora Morgan, Manitoba's First Nations family advocate, says she refuses to believe every one of the over 10,000 children in care across the province was apprehended due to maltreatment in their homes. (Photo courtesy of LinkedIn)

*Note: Name of mother has been changed to protect her identity.*

---

Kelly, a single mother of five, had her children taken away two years ago. She said if she had been given the proper support, it would have never come to that.

"It wasn't abuse or substance abuse. I went through a lot of stuff over really nothing," Kelly said.

The 27-year-old said she was suffering from postpartum depression, and that's why her children were apprehended.

According to the Child and Family Services Authority Act, there has to be suspected maltreatment in a home before a child is apprehended — whether that's physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, or the child is in the presence of drug or alcohol abuse.

Cora Morgan, Manitoba's new First Nations family advocate, said she refuses to believe that has happened for all of the over 10,000 children currently in the province's child welfare system.

Morgan said she believes there are things mentioned in the CFS act that aren't always being practised by caseworkers — like a full investigation to confirm the suspected maltreatment is actually happening.



In her role as director of Manitoba's CCPA office, Molly McCracken studies the political and the historical context behind why families may be involved in the child welfare system. (Courtesy CCPA)

"One of the other things that's also in the act that I know for certain isn't happening is preventative measures — where there's supports brought into families to help parents when there's trouble or perceived trouble," Morgan said.

Molly McCracken, director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' (CCPA) Manitoba office, said for the numbers to turn around in Manitoba, social workers need to work from a different viewpoint.



"Let's differentiate between an urgent situation and one where, perhaps, if we wrap supports around the family and make sure that they have good housing and resources, we can prevent that kind of very dramatic and traumatic intervention, which is apprehension."

## **Traumatic intervention**

When Kelly's children were apprehended, she was battling post-partum depression. Her sister had also just died.

"I didn't know what grieving was," she said. "I was uneducated about what happens when you grieve and when you lose someone."

'It should be an extraordinary thing that the child is removed from their home and unfortunately it's a daily occurrence for aboriginal families.'

- Katherine Hensel, aboriginal lawyer

She said she was crying a lot and broke down at her children's school. Someone called CFS, and that night they came to her home and took her children away.

After that, she sunk further into depression.

"I was always sleeping. I didn't want to get out of bed. I never showered. I barely ate. My mom had to care for me. It was really bad."

Her three youngest children were placed in short-term foster homes, and her older two went to stay with their dads before moving into a group shelter. Kelly said Winnipeg's CLOUT (Community Led Organizations United Together) program ensured she made it to visitations in time, and helped her get back on her feet.

She started asking for help, went back to school and enrolled in a variety of parenting programs. Slowly, after nine months, her children were integrated back into her life.

"They shouldn't be taking kids away from their families without really trying to help them," Kelly said.

"I know it costs a lot of money for them to take kids and put them somewhere. They should actually focus more on families; to empower them and help them, and not just to come and take their kids over a phone call or what someone says."



Aboriginal lawyer Katherine Hensel said removal of children remains the default for CFS, despite there being healthier and more effective alternatives. (Courtesy of Hensel Barristers)

Katherine Hensel, an aboriginal lawyer in Toronto, agrees with Kelly. But she said there's not just financial costs associated with placing children in care, but emotional and cultural costs.

"The system, as it's currently set up, has no problem spending money — thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars — on keeping children in foster care," Hensel said.

"But often [it] won't spend a dime on supporting children and families within their home and keeping the family together. It should be an extraordinary thing that the child is removed from their home and unfortunately it's a daily occurrence for aboriginal families."

Kelly's family has been back together for a year, but the experience is something the children still talk about and won't soon forget.

"It was hard at first because [the children] were hurt, too, and we had to do a lot of healing with them," said Kelly.

## **Political will needed**

Through her research with CCPA, McCracken found that when aboriginal families are connected to their culture, and understand what's happening to them in a historical and economic context, they have the ability to improve their own situation.

"We know some of the root causes of interaction with the child welfare system are issues of poverty," she said.

"Personally, I don't agree with moving backward. What does it take to improve the system as it stands is what I'd like to see."

Morgan added there needs to be a "willingness from government to effect meaningful change."

"Not Band-Aid approaches, but really involve and engage our community in finding the answers to this issue."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/early-intervention-could-prevent-cfs-apprehensions-winnipeg-mom-says-1.3128513>

## **Saskatoon First Nations elder prays for children in foster care**

### **Pipe ceremony at White Buffalo Lodge**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 29, 2015 11:27 AM CT Last Updated: Jun 29, 2015 11:38 AM CT



Chris Martell, father of Evander Daniels, shakes hands with First Nations elder Walter Linklater at a pipe ceremony. (Dan Zakreski/CBC)

Saskatoon First Nation elder Walter Linklater called on the spirit of Evander Daniels to help other children in foster care.

Daniels died when he was 22-months-old while in foster care.

"I'm asking Evander in the spirit world to intercede for all other foster children on earth," he said.

Linklater made the request during a pipe ceremony outside the White Buffalo Youth Lodge. About two dozen people gathered in a circle to pray and share their stories.

Among them was Chris Martell – the father of Evander Daniels.

He said the pipe ceremony is special.

"It brings everybody together in a peaceful ceremony for everybody to come for some healing and some prayers," he said.

"Let everyone in the community share their pain."

Linklater also prayed for the forest fire victims in the north, the First Nations and Metis children "scooped" by the government in the 1960s, and all foster parents.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/saskatoon-first-nations-elder-prays-for-children-in-foster-care-1.3132029>

## **Universities will help reset relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people**

TIM McTIERNAN

Contributed to The Globe and Mail

Published Monday, Jun. 29, 2015 10:00AM EDT

Last updated Tuesday, Jun. 30, 2015 5:00AM EDT

*Tim McTiernan is president and vice-chancellor of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) and a member of the board of directors of Universities Canada.*

For most of us, Canada Day is time off from work, a red and white cake and fireworks as the sun goes down. Like any birthday celebration, it can be a bit inward-focused; celebrating "us" with barely a nod to the world Canada entered. This year, with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission fresh in our minds, it's also an opportunity to reflect on the 148-year federation, how we all fit in and who we want to become through reconciliation.

The TRC has given us much to consider. It calls for a reset of the relationship between First Nations and non-indigenous communities. Canadian universities have a key role to play. The TRC specifically calls on educational institutions to engage with indigenous communities and be leaders in reconciliation.

Canada's universities welcome the call. We're ready to do more.

Universities Canada, the national organization representing 97 universities across the country, will unveil this week new principles on indigenous education. These principles were developed by university leaders over the past year, to signal our shared commitment

to enhancing educational opportunities for indigenous students – from kindergarten to postgraduate studies – and fostering reconciliation across Canada.

Higher education has much to contribute to a renewed relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada. The cohabitation of Western and indigenous knowledge on campuses has the power to open a dialogue among cultures, enhance our mutual understanding and make change happen.

There is a moral, social and economic imperative to act.

The aboriginal population in Canada is growing six times faster than the non-aboriginal population. Among them are 560,000 youths. Imagine the potential that brings. But fewer than 10 per cent of indigenous people in Canada have a university degree. That's about one-third of the national rate of 28 per cent. Potential doesn't go far without opportunity and nurturing.

Canada's education gap means that far too many aboriginal people are denied the quality of life that most of us have come to expect. Education has the power to transform lives, sustain cultures and strengthen communities.

Universities are committed to doing their part to close this gap. Among the 13 principles to be announced this week is institutional commitment at every level to develop more opportunities for indigenous students. That means everything from community partnerships to financial assistance, academic support and mentorship.

The principles also recognize the importance of greater indigenization of the curriculum and enhanced indigenous education leadership at all levels of the university.

These commitments go beyond individual supports and acknowledge the need for a whole-of-community approach and meaningful interaction and dialogue. They recognize the importance of providing greater exposure and knowledge for non-indigenous students on the realities, histories, cultures and beliefs of indigenous people in Canada. And they underscore the need to foster deeper intercultural engagement among indigenous and non-indigenous students, faculty and staff.

The momentum is there. Many of these principles build on efforts already under way.

Throughout the country, there are now more than 350 university programs specifically designed for aboriginal students' access and success, with new initiatives coming on board.

Most universities in Canada partner with local aboriginal communities. In addition to supports on campus, many have successful outreach programs, providing educational support and mentoring opportunities to students starting as early as the elementary level.

Almost three out of five universities offer tailored counselling to meet the unique needs of aboriginal students. For example, the UOIT-Baagwating Indigenous Centre at my institution, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, has counsellors and elders available for supports on and off campus. Criminology student Angela Nagy, Algonquin, Migisi Odenaw, tells us, “This resource centre is a symbol to me, as a First Nations person that I am valued and celebrated here at UOIT and furthermore my culture is not forgotten and that is most important to me.”

We need to listen to young people like Angela.

In addition to my experience here at UOIT, I have witnessed the incredible potential of aboriginal young people through living and working in Northern Ontario, Yukon and British Columbia as a senior civil servant responsible for education policy. And I share with so many Canadians a newfound understanding of the power of reconciliation following the six years of hearings and the June closing events of Canada’s Truth and Conciliation Commission. From both, I am left optimistic for the future.

Canada’s universities will be the leaders the commission has called on us to be. And as we reflect on the multiple dimensions of what Canada Day really means, university leaders will do our part to help reset the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous communities, through education, dialogue and collective action. As we move toward Canada’s sesquicentennial year in 2017, it’s time to make things right.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/universities-will-help-reset-relations-between-indigenous-and-non-indigenous-people/article25150361/>

## Parents rally to save aboriginal school in Vancouver

**VSBC also closing Maquinna Annex**

[Cheryl Rossi](#) / Vancouver Courier

June 29, 2015 03:25 PM



Diana Day wants an aboriginal focus school for secondary students. Photo: Dan Toulgoet

Parents worried about the closing of Sir William Macdonald elementary held a rally last Thursday. They don't want the aboriginal focus school there discontinued.

Macdonald elementary is one of the schools identified for closure in a recently released report commissioned by the Minister of Education.

Special adviser EY's report states 68 students were enrolled at Macdonald in 2014-2015, meaning it was only at 25 per capacity. The report notes the school on East Hastings Street near Victoria Drive is rated as high risk in the case of an earthquake, but it remains unfunded for seismic mitigation. In 2010, the Vancouver School board projected annual savings of \$275,000 if Macdonald was closed.

Diana Day, co-vice chair of the District Parent Advisory Council and a speaker at the rally, says of 35 of 70 students enrolled at Macdonald attend the aboriginal focus school. The focus school welcomes students of all backgrounds and the only kindergarten class in the school is part of the aboriginal focus school.

Curtis Clearsky of the Aboriginal Focus School's Parent Advisory Committee sent a letter to the VSB June 17 asserting the board has made minimal effort to support the success of the program.

The Aboriginal Focus School PAC held a related press conference June 23. The press release states the PAC wants the VSB to commit immediately to prevent the closure of the aboriginal focus school, dedicate money to further develop the succession of the school together with aboriginal families and the community.

Day doesn't believe the VSB would terminate the aboriginal focus school. She was heartened to see the VSB's superintendent and trustees from all three parties attend the rally.

Day noted parents from outside the neighbourhood and the district send their children to the focus school because it's the only one of its kind.

The aboriginal focus school accommodates students in kindergarten to Grade 4. Day wants an aboriginal focus school for secondary students.

"Once kids switch to Grade 5, they're pushed out into the mainstream schools and it's not always culturally safe for them. Although there are some changes, it's not fast, and we're still losing kids in Grades 7, 8 and 9," she said. "There were 251 aboriginal youth last year in alternative programs in Vancouver."

The VSB says it isn't currently discussing closing Macdonald. Jen Hill, community engagement coordinator, told the Courier school and district staff have been in touch with the PAC to discuss members' concerns.



Hill noted the VSB created the aboriginal focus school as part of its ongoing development of programs that contribute to the academic success and positive self-esteem through cultural awareness for aboriginal students as part of its Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

The Courier could not reach Clearsky for comment.

### **Annex axed**

The Vancouver School Board is closing Maquinna Annex for a savings of \$154,080.

The annex at East Fourth Avenue and Renfrew Street has seen declining enrolment for years, with 109 students in 2008-2009 and 29 in 2014-2015.

Parents could send their children to the annex or Chief Maquinna elementary on East Second Avenue near Slocan Street for Grade 3.

In early March, 34 students were enrolled at the annex. Then parents transferred children to the main school, decreasing enrolment at the annex to 22 by the end of April.

“After discussion with school and district administration about the educational and social opportunities available at the main school compared to the annex, parents of all remaining students ultimately chose to have their children attend the main school next year,” the June 17 report states.

Staff from the annex will be employed elsewhere in the district. The StrongStart Early Learning Centre at the annex is moving to Maquinna elementary.

The VSB hasn't decided how to use the annex in the future. The report states the board hasn't closed the school under the official definition of the School Act. Options for the building will be considered in the VSB's Long Range Strategic Facilities Plan.

See more at: <http://www.vancourier.com/news/parents-rally-to-save-aboriginal-school-in-vancouver-1.1983641#sthash.Jw429d6J.dpuf>

## **1st-ever Aboriginal Educators' Symposium underway in Yellowknife**

**Provincial and territorial Education ministers to talk teacher recruitment, legacy of residential schools**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 29, 2015 1:42 PM CT Last Updated: Jun 29, 2015 1:42 PM CT

Provincial and territorial ministers of education are in Yellowknife today to discuss the strengthening of aboriginal education in Canada, in the first-ever Aboriginal Educators' Symposium.

The symposium, which will last through the week, will focus on teacher recruitment and training, as well as the lasting legacy of residential schools, according to N.W.T. education minister Jackson Lafferty.



N.W.T. Education minister Jackson Lafferty says the aboriginal educators' symposium will focus on teacher recruitment and training, as well as the lasting legacy of residential schools. (CBC)

"Our national plan builds on existing work and also the challenges for all of us to stake concrete action that focus on history and legacy of residential schools, and related teaching training," said Lafferty.

The symposium is the result of a recommendation from a [report issued earlier this month by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#). The Commission made a total of 94 recommendations in its report, aimed at repairing the relationship between aboriginal people and the rest of Canada. During the meetings, other recommendations from the report will be discussed.

The Northwest Territories and Nunavut [were two of the first jurisdictions in Canada to develop a curriculum](#) focusing on the legacy of residential schools. Developing such a curriculum was another recommendation from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/1st-ever-aboriginal-educators-symposium-underway-in-yellowknife-1.3132099>

**How many NWT teachers are Aboriginal, and is it changing?**

[Ollie Williams](#) — [July 2, 2015](#)



Denise Kurszewski is superintendent for the Beaufort Delta region.

### **The first-ever Aboriginal educators' symposium took place in Yellowknife last week – and heard a call for change in Aboriginal teaching.**

There are currently 682 teachers in the Northwest Territories, of whom 108 identify as Aboriginal.

Denise Kurszewski was one of the panellists at the symposium. Born in Inuvik, she is the superintendent of nine schools in the Beaufort Delta region.

Kurszewski says the number of Aboriginal teachers in the territory is “nowhere near where it should be” but she believes things are starting to change. Her priorities include introducing mandated training in indigenous culture and history for all Canadian teachers, alongside improving the supports for Aboriginal educators.

Here's what she told us after attending the symposium.

---

#### **Right now there's a movement toward indigenizing education.**

This symposium was a wonderful opportunity to have our voices heard and also give advice and direction. Provincial and territorial education ministers are committed to working toward improving education for Aboriginal students.

There is an achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission just came out with its recommendations and we have to realize inter-generational trauma does exist. There are ways to improve the system, for sure.

There's a need for all educators to understand the history and culture of indigenous people across the country. There needs to be a mandated program for all educators entering the system in Canada so they do have some background knowledge on the people they are working with.

We also want to be able to infuse traditional cultural knowledge into the curriculum today. We need to have our own people working in that area.

How convinced am I that these things will happen? I have trust, and I have hope. Without that I wouldn't be here.

But there are challenges on many levels.

For example, we heard that Aboriginal people coming back to their communities after training as educators sometimes face lateral violence directed toward them – maybe because they are a professional, or for other reasons.

There is a lot of gossip, a lot of nepotism and other things people have to face. We need to help them through that process, mentor them and give them encouragement as well.

One of the first things I think we can look at is the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in understanding and having empathy as to why our communities and people are the way they are.

This is not our normal way of being. We have very honourable lives for the most part and, when there is dysfunction, that's a symptom of something a lot deeper. We don't want to paint that picture that this is all we are.

Our students are very knowledgeable on the land, they still hunt, they still fish, they still practise a lot of the traditions. We want to validate that. It's my ultimate hope that they can succeed in the academic world while their own traditional ways and language are not forgotten.

Out of 682 teachers in the NWT, currently 108 identify as Aboriginal. So it's not anywhere near where it should be but I think it's a start.

In our region for this coming year alone, we have seven northern Aboriginal grads coming back with Bachelor of Education degrees. That's very promising for us and I think it's up to all of us to inspire, motivate and help other people into that profession.

*Denise Kurszewski was talking to Moose FM's Ollie Williams.*

**Direct Link:** <https://www.myyellowknifenow.com/6495/how-many-nwt-teachers-are-aboriginal-and-is-it-changing/>

## Aboriginal Health

# New UBC Nursing Curriculum Aims To Teach Respectful Care Of First Nations Patients

CBC

Posted: 06/24/2015 6:49 pm EDT Updated: 06/24/2015 8:59 pm EDT



Nursing experts at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan School of Nursing are teaching a new generation of students about delivering culturally respectful treatment to First Nations patients.

Retired nurse Jessie Nyberg and Prof. Donna Kurtz will discuss the new curriculum at the [2015 International Conference on Health Promoting Universities and Colleges](#) in Kelowna on Wednesday.

Nyberg, herself a Shuswap elder, says it's important for people to understand how residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and the Indian Act affected First Nations, and resulted in intergenerational trauma.

"With that, we lost our language, we lost our culture, we lost our tradition and so therefore we lost our identity," she told Daybreak South.

"We lost parenting skills, we lost what it was meant to be loved by parents. So our young people — well, through the generations — we need to again learn what our identity is, learn our languages, and regain our health."

## Truth and reconciliation

Requiring medical and nursing students to learn about aboriginal health issues, the history and legacy of residential schools, and indigenous teachings and practices is part of the 94 recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The commission also recommended requiring medical and nursing students to train in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism, and the new curriculum aims to reflect that.

For example, rather than have nurses come into a patient's room and give orders, it's important they respect the patient, ask questions and share in the planning of care, Nyberg said.

Kurtz says the nursing curriculum teaches students about colonial history and trauma, and to "respect each other as human beings, no matter what the colour of skin [is]."

"Students sometimes do resist because it's new knowledge for them," she said.

"They've not learnt it in elementary and high school, so they come to the university and we have the knowledge keepers and elders come to the classroom for face-to-face [discussion], so they're able to talk to aboriginal people and get to know them and respect them within a relationship."

**Direct Link:** [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/06/24/new-ubc-nursing-curriculum\\_n\\_7658530.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/06/24/new-ubc-nursing-curriculum_n_7658530.html)

## One-of-a-kind addictions treatment unveiled in Saskatoon

By [Meaghan Craig](#) Reporter Global News, June 25, 2015 8:08 pm



**Watch above: A new, first-of-its-kind treatment for indigenous peoples with addictions has been unveiled in Saskatoon. Meaghan Craig takes a look at what's hoped to be a breakthrough in recovery through culture.**

SASKATOON – When it comes to addictions and treatment among the first nations population there are no easy answers. One thing that is certain, say experts, is that drug and alcohol addictions among indigenous people is a serious health concern in the country.

Sharon Leslie Acoose knows this all too well. She used to live every day as if it was her last and not in a good way.

“You never knew if you were going to live or die or what.”

Acoose says she came from the streets and a long line of addicts. She would use for the first time at 13 and did every drug known including heroin and cocaine.

“I think my lowest low was just having nothing, nowhere, I was lost. I had another kid at 30 and I just was not going anywhere,” said Acoose.

“I had to either die or change so that lowest moment was just not wanting to be here.”

At 62-years old, Acoose is 25 years sober as of April 1 of this year and says culture showed her strength.

“I started going to ceremonies, I started sweating, I started doing a lot of other ceremonies, attending round dances, feasts, pipe ceremonies, I mean that’s where it’s at for me,” added Acoose of the Sakimay First Nation.

“I’d rather go into a sweat lodge than have a drink or do drugs.”

It’s this cultural approach that experts say is vital on a client’s road to recovery and is why a *Native Wellness Assessment* tool was developed based on indigenous knowledge. The tool was announced Thursday at the Saskatoon Inn and focuses on the overall wellness of a client from a holistic perspective.

“If you have a client in front of you and you have an indigenous client to not recognize who they are, what their background is and what is important to them and their own identity, we’re failing and we’re failing dearly,” said Collen Dell, research chair in substance abuse at the University of Saskatchewan.

Dell helped developed the tool along with a team of 50 others compiled of researchers from across the country, elders, knowledge keepers and decision makers.

The tool is two separate documents, a self-report form for the client to assess their native wellness, the other, an observer rating form. Each is nine pages in length and a tool that is the first of its kind in the world.

Experts say most of the theories and theoretical models that exist right now in evidence are based on a white, adult male population.

“You can’t dissect people and only look at one aspect of their life and hope to promote wellness, if you want to promote wellness you have to look at the whole person and you have to look at what does wellness mean from an indigenous lens,” said Carol Hopkins, executive director of the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation.



Over time, the data collected by using the tool will go into a national database, establishing evidence on how important culture is in getting a client's life back on track and eventually shaping the way treatment centres across the country guide their clients through their journey to sobriety.

**Direct Link:** <http://globalnews.ca/news/2076277/researchers-launch-a-world-first-a-tool-to-help-indigenous-addicts-recover/>

## Aboriginal Identity & Representation

### Should all students learn First Nations languages?



Roberta Edzerza says Sm'algyax is the language the land speaks in the Prince Rupert area, so it makes sense that all students learn it. (Facebook )

**Sunday June 28, 2015**

Sure, Canadian students can learn their other official language at school. Knowing *un peu de français* might help a bilingual culture, but what about learning something closer to home-- like a local First Nations language? That's what kindergarten to grade 4 students in Prince Rupert, B.C. will do.

Starting in the fall, the city's school district is taking a language program that it offered in some schools, and making it mandatory for all primary students. The program will teach simple lessons in Sm'algyax, through song and play.

Roberta Edzerza is the district's Aboriginal Education Principal. She belongs to the Tsimshian First Nation, which speaks Sm'algyax. She hopes the language program will enhance Prince Rupert's culture, and strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the community.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

**Why do you believe that the students in your school board should learn a First Nations language?**

This is Tsimshian territory, and Sm'algyax is the language of the territory. So, in our land, the land speaks Sm'algyax. And, with a high percentage of our population is Tsimshian people, 62% of our students are Aboriginal. People stay here and move here for the richness and diverse population, and the rich culture that's present here.

**You say it's the language the land speaks. Can you elaborate on that?**

With learning the language, you really have to learn off the land. Traditionally that's how we've learned our culture and we continue to do that, and learning our language, they go hand in hand with language and culture. And, having that richness and being able to learn that also in the school system, is just great.

**What's the reaction from the community?**

We get a lot of feedback from our non-Aboriginal families, people are really embracing that the schools are offering Sm'algyax language from kindergarten, and they're celebrating and supporting it, and it's a good thing for everybody.

We have small pockets of people who aren't there yet, and we are hopeful that they will value the importance of Sm'algyax language and learning additional languages.

**How do you see Prince Rupert changing from initiatives like this?**

I see a decrease in racism and an increase in Aboriginal understanding. I see genuine partnerships, possibly an immersion Sm'algyax program. I see strengthened relationships.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/the180/keeping-whales-in-captivity-lowering-speed-limits-and-u-s-style-political-fundraising-1.3126557/should-all-students-learn-first-nations-languages-1.3126614>

## **Churches face challenge in TRC call to value aboriginal spirituality**

**Anglican, Catholic and United church leaders say steps happening to recognize indigenous culture**

By Joanne Stassen, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 24, 2015 6:29 PM CT Last Updated: Jun 25, 2015 8:17 AM CT



Mark MacDonald is the Anglican Church of Canada's National Indigenous Bishop. He doesn't have a diocese per se, but is responsible for 225 indigenous churches, mostly on reserves, across Canada. (Anglican Church of Canada)

"We have a long way to go," says Anglican Bishop Mark MacDonald, when it comes to a formal recognition of aboriginal spirituality by his church.

It's just one of the actions the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for in its final report.

About 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children were taken from their families to attend the schools from the 19th century until 1996. The schools were funded by the government, but most were run by missionaries or staff from the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and United churches.

MacDonald says many people in the pews see residential schools as a well-intentioned project with a few bad eggs, but the TRC report calls it an "example of systemic, institutional evil...that swamped the goodness of the individual people involved."

"The church became a chaplaincy to a particular political-cultural regime," he said. "This calls for us to understand the difference between the church as the body of Christ, and the church that expresses itself as an institution."

For the Anglican church, MacDonald says, reconciliation will mean recognizing the ways it still reflects the same ideas and values that led to residential schools.

## **'Fine words'**

"It's a call for humility on the part of the church, trying to understand something was done by our beloved church in a previous generation that is painful, that was wrong, " says United Church General Secretary Nora Sanders.



Nora Sanders, general secretary of the United Church of Canada, says reconciliation is 'a call for humility on the part of the church.' (United Church of Canada)

The United Church was not involved directly in residential schools in the territories, but it has a congregation in Yellowknife.

The United Church has already made two apologies, one in 1986 at the time of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and another in 1998 specifically about residential schools.

"Really fine words," Sanders says. "It takes longer to live that. The primary thing is to have it not be something just coming from the main office of the church but from congregations across the country."

The United Church has a history of being open to working with other cultures and other faiths. Sanders says they're looking at ways to "fully respect traditions of aboriginal people, recognizing of course that there are many spiritual traditions within the aboriginal people in this country."

## **'God has long been there'**

"There has been a huge shift in the Catholic style of missionary work," since residential schools were started, says Bishop Murray Chatlain.

Chatlain served six years as the Bishop for the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories and is now the Bishop for the Diocese of Keewatin-Le Pas, which covers parts of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta.



Murray Chatlain, the Roman Catholic Bishop for Keewatin-Le Pas, says there has been 'a huge shift in the Catholic style of missionary work,' since residential schools. (The Catholic Diocese of Keewatin-Le Pas)

"Now, whenever we are coming into a new cultural group or tradition the first thing we do is remove our shoes lest we forget that God has long been there before we have come, and we step on something holy," he says.

[Chatlain made his own apology in 2009](#) for the Mackenzie-Fort Smith diocese's role in the residential school system, but there's still been no formal apology to residential school students from the Vatican.

However, Chatlain says the Vatican's openness to aboriginal spirituality was already on display when Pope John Paul II visited Fort Simpson, N.W.T., 25 years ago.

"The drum was used there, there was a tea dance, a lot of the traditional elements were used and very much respected."

He says aboriginal issues have a much higher profile now at national meetings and the Diocese has included aboriginal lay-people at diocesan meetings — a big shift, he says, since he began working in the North eight years ago.

Chatlain says they're also looking at ways of showing more respect for traditional prayers and drum songs in the liturgy.

## **National indigenous bishop**

Anglican bishop Mark MacDonald says accepting indigenous spirituality as a valid form of worship equal to their own will be a challenge for Christians in the pew who "think there is only one way to be Anglican."

But in some ways, MacDonald himself is an indication that the Anglican church is moving forward.

He is aboriginal, with ancestors who were residential school students, and was consecrated as his church's National Indigenous Bishop in 2007. He doesn't have a diocese per se, but is responsible for 225 indigenous churches, mostly on reserves, across Canada.

MacDonald describes those indigenous congregations as a "revolution within the church."

"Indigenous Anglicans are trying to form a church that is self-determining, within the larger church, that expresses the cultural and spiritual needs of indigenous people within that larger framework."

Those cultural practices have always been there, according to MacDonald, "but the church always said 'your success is based on your capacity to mimic what we do.'

"Indigenous Anglicans have always quietly continued, hidden from the view of the missionaries, an indigenous worldview and respect for the ideals and practices of our peoples."

Now, says MacDonald, "We're coming out of the closet."

He says indigenous Anglicans are exploring what it means to be self-determining, while still remaining part of the larger Anglican communion.

"We are learning as we go," MacDonald admits.

"We're hoping and believing that people within the church will give us the freedom to be who we need to be.

"I see this as the beginning of a new day for indigenous people reclaiming their humanity, but also giving back to the peoples who have oppressed them the possibility of a fuller life of peace and hope and justice for all people in Canada."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/churches-face-challenge-in-trc-call-to-value-aboriginal-spirituality-1.3124562>

## **'Cultural appropriation:' Inuit react to Calgary man's drum dance**

### **Zinour Fathoullin's performance at Aboriginal Awareness Week event triggers backlash**

By Kieran Oudshoorn, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 26, 2015 4:12 PM CT Last Updated: Jun 26, 2015 5:16 PM CT

A Calgary man has sparked a debate in Nunavut over cultural appropriation after he was filmed wearing Inuit sealskin clothing and demonstrating drum dancing and throatsinging at an Aboriginal Awareness Week event.

"I saw him go up in his full sealskin outfit and do his performance," said James Kuptana, a co-ordinator of volunteers for the event. He says he was the only Inuk involved.

"I was actually really upset because I didn't think it was accurate based on what I had seen other Inuit performers do."



Zinour Fathoullin performs at a National Aboriginal Day event in Calgary earlier this month. This image is a still taken from a video recorded by Liberty Rivers and posted on Facebook. (Liberty Rivers/Facebook)

Zinour Fathoullin's wife Gayle says the pair have been part of National Aboriginal Day events in Calgary for 15 years.

"We aren't Inuit, but we are just asked to share that culture with people as a celebration of aboriginal people's day."

Zinour Fathoullin is from Russia. Gayle says she met her husband in Siberia, where Zinour, a trained dancer, worked with Siberian Inuit. They moved to Cape Dorset, Nunavut, in 1996, where they became involved in local dance activities. They participated in a performance to mark the birth of Nunavut in 1999 and toured briefly with several local dancers showcasing Inuit culture.

The Fathoullins now operate Legacy Artwork in Calgary, selling artwork and custom paintings. They also offer workshops, such as one titled "What's hot in the igloo?" which offers "An exciting and interactive day or half day program that brings the Canadian and Siberian Inuit cultures to life through dance, drumming, storytelling, and traditional Inuit clothing" for \$800 a day.

## **'We still exist'**

Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, an Inuk filmmaker in Iqaluit, told CBC she was "disgusted" to hear about the Fathoullins' enterprise.

"They're making money on pretending to be experts on Inuit culture when there are Inuit there! I mean, we still exist," Arnaquq-Baril said.

"It's like they are saying Inuit culture is dead and they will just act it out so people can imagine what it would be like.





James Kuptana, a co-ordinator of volunteers for the event and the only Inuk involved, says he was 'really upset' after watching Zinour Fathoullin's performance. (submitted by James Kuptana)

"Sometimes there are situations where it is a fine line when you are not quite sure whether to call something cultural appropriation or not. But this is so far beyond."

Gayle Fathoullin responded to the controversy with [a statement on Facebook](#).

"We never claim to be Inuit and never have," she wrote.

"We are always up front in stating that we are presenting from the perspective of our time lived in the Siberian and Canadian Arctic and a sharing of these cultures.

"When Zinour dances (as in the video circulating), he is careful to explain that his dance is his own modern interpretation of aspects of Inuit culture and dance and drumming rather than a representation of traditional Inuit dance and drumming. When we throat sing, we are clear that this is our own version of it and a demonstration."

## **'An ambassador of the Inuit culture'**

Gayle writes that Zinour was mentored by an unnamed Siberian shaman and was given permission to use a Shaman's drum for performance and teaching purposes.

Speaking to CBC News, Gayle elaborated.

"She must have had a sense that he would be a person to be an ambassador of the Inuit culture," she said.

"She gifted Zinour with her stories and asked him to put her stories — to interpret them through dance and drumming."



Mary Wilman, mayor of Iqaluit, says she knew Zinour in 1998 when she was a co-ordinator for an Inuit dance group. She says they hired him to do choreography for the group, but 'that's totally different than for him to automatically become a knowledge [holder] or expert on Inuit.' (CBC)

Gayle also names Nunavut Inuit elders who, she said, "shared their stories" and "encouraged me to just go out and have fun with it and to use it as a vehicle to share the Inuit culture."

In the Facebook statement she says Mary Wilman, now mayor of Iqaluit, invited them to Iqaluit to choreograph dances and work with an Inuit youth dance group.

Wilman says she knew Zinour in 1998 when she was a co-ordinator for Inuusutut Muminitiit, or "young Inuit dancers," in Iqaluit.

"We hired him to do choreography," Wilman said. "That's totally different than for him to automatically become a knowledge [holder] or expert on Inuit."

## **Tanya Tagaq responds**

David Serkoak, a well-known teacher and drum dancer from Arviat, Nunavut, is also mentioned by the Fathoullins in the statement as the maker of the drums they use.

Now living in Ottawa, Serkoak says he's too old to hold grudges or worry about people who imitate Inuit drum dancing. But he does say, "If I were to go back, who bought some of my drums and was misusing them or being used not the Inuit way? Yes, one of them is Zinour."

Well-known Inuk performer Tanya Tagaq responded on Facebook to Gayle's statement, in which Gayle said the Fathoullins helped launch her career.

"You do not have to be claiming to be Inuit to be culturally appropriating," she wrote.

"It would be all right if you were doing it in your backyard for no profit, but us indigenous performers have a hard enough time making ends meet without non-indigenous people taking gigs and misinforming people."

## **Making a statement about identity**

Arthur Manuel, a Secwepemc from interior B.C., is director of the Indigenous Network on Economy and Trade, which advocates on the international level to achieve recognition of aboriginal title and rights.

He says aboriginal people are making a statement about their indigenous identity when they wear traditional clothing.

"At certain times you need to be very cognizant that you may get some form of backlash against being indigenous. Non-natives can just take off [regalia] and blend right into the non-indigenous circle.

"There's a liability that the non-indigenous person, through taking on that dress, never really paid. They can do it at their pleasure."

Gayle Fathoullin is adamant that she and her husband have done nothing wrong.

"Any opportunity to celebrate a culture, when it comes from a place in the heart can't be harmful," she said.

"The Inuit of Calgary also have a responsibility to not only be critical and angry and upset but also take a step forward and reach out to us."

That's a sentiment James Kuptana does not agree with.

"I think the general Canadian public knows so little about aboriginal culture and they know even less about Inuit culture, which is a specific group of aboriginal people.

"So when I see misrepresentation, I would almost rather have no representation."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/cultural-appropriation-inuit-react-to-calgary-man-s-drum-dance-1.3129515>

## **Wagon convoy in B.C.'s Interior connects First Nations youth to their culture**

Wendy Stueck

Farwell Canyon, B.C. — The Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Jun. 26, 2015 7:28PM EDT

Last updated Friday, Jun. 26, 2015 7:35PM EDT



Roy Mulvahill and Marvin William ride in a covered wagon during the Xeni Gwet'in Youth Wagon Trip. (John Lehmann/The Globe and Mail)

## 'Who we are as a people'

Every year, a convoy of horse-drawn wagons makes its way from the B.C. First Nation of Xeni Gwet'in to the Williams Lake Stampede. Reporter **Wendy Stueck** and photographer **John Lehmann** join the ride

Just before noon in the Chilcotin Valley, Kaitlyn Lulua has her hands full.

Ms. Lulua, 8, is trying to wrest the bridle off her horse so it can drink more freely from a stream. In the process, the headgear has become tangled and she is struggling as the horse snorts impatiently for water.

Her father, Jimmy Lulua, 30, moves closer, keeping his own horse steady while he helps his daughter remove the bridle, loop it over a saddle horn and lead the horse to drink.

The exchange takes place with few words and little fuss, one of many such lessons that happen every day during the Xeni Gwet'in Youth Wagon Trip. An idea hatched by Mr. Lulua and his wife, June, the trip is now in its seventh year and has become a highlight for the Xeni Gwet'in, a First Nations community based in the remote Nemiah Valley.

The ride is particularly symbolic this time: It is taking place following a court ruling last year that confirmed the Tsilhqot'in Nation and its six aboriginal groups, including the Xeni Gwet'in, holds aboriginal title to about 1,900 square kilometres of interior B.C., including the Nemiah Valley.



Members of the Xeni Gwet'in Youth Wagon Trip. (John Lehmann/The Globe and Mail)

Mr. Lulua isn't keen on drawing such connections, preferring to focus on the ride's role in fostering health, cultural awareness and self confidence among First Nations youth. When pressed, however, he says there is a link between last year's Supreme Court of Canada decision and the wagon trip, one visible in the proud smiles of the youngsters who wave, unrattled by passing logging trucks, at camera-toting families on the banks of the Chilcotin River.

"Both are about who we are as a people," says Mr. Lulua.

"When we are coming down that hill, we are telling people something about who we are."

## **Xeni Gwet'in Youth Wagon Trip**

**What:** An eight-day, roughly 200-kilometre horse and wagon ride from Xeni Gwet'in, a First Nations community in the Nemiah Valley, to Williams Lake.

**When:** The trip is timed to coincide with the start of the Williams Lake Stampede, which takes place each year around Canada Day. The Xeni Gwet'in group was scheduled to make a grand entrance Friday and to ride in Saturday's parade.

**Logistics:** Support includes an advance vehicle and driver who communicates with truckers along the route; a cooking and clean-up station that travels ahead of the wagon train; and a 450-gallon water tank to supplement water sources along the route.

**Cost:** About \$20,000 from community fundraising and donations. That pays for trailers, horses and wagons; feed for horses; and three meals a day for riders and volunteers.

**Trip rules:** Riders under 17 years of age must be accompanied by a chaperone. No personal electronic devices. No drugs or alcohol. Riders supply their own tents and gear and, in most cases, their own horses.

**Who can ride:** Young people from Xeni Gwet'in and neighbouring First Nations communities; non-First Nations participants who pass muster with wagon bosses.

**This year's convoy:** Six wagons, about 40 horses, roughly 100 participants including elders in their 70s and children as young as eight.

**Rules of the road:** Riders and wagons keep to the right side of the road in tight formation. Riders are typically on the road for four to six hours each day.

The wagon trip comes with modern conveniences including recreational vehicles, waterproof tents and portable generators. It also speaks to Tsilhqot'in history and culture, in which horses loomed large in trade, travel and daily life. Herds of wild horses roam the Nemiah Valley and Tsilhqot'in people relied on horses to traverse the wild terrain they have always considered their own.

Xeni Gwet'in chief Roger William, the lead plaintiff in the title case, recalls traveling to Williams Lake by horse and wagon as a boy.

Horses also bore the six Tsilhqot'in war chiefs, five of whom were hanged in 1864 and a sixth who was hanged the following year after what is known as the Chilcotin War. The conflict broke out during the Cariboo Gold Rush after the province authorized a road to be built from the coast to the Cariboo through Tsilhqot'in territory. Tsilhqot'in warriors attacked and killed the members of a road crew in April 1864. Within a month, 20 people were dead and a manhunt was underway.

In August, 1864, some of the warriors agreed to meet with government officials for what they understood would be peace talks. Five were arrested, charged with murder and hanged. The sixth chief was hanged the following summer.

B.C. Premier Christy Clark made an official apology for the wrongful hangings last year, part of an ongoing, bumpy process of recalibrating the relationship between the province and the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

That political context is not much in evidence on the wagon trip.

Each day begins with taking down tents, packing bags and saddling horses for the day's ride. Cooks provide hot meals but riders are responsible for cleaning their own dishes and utensils and making their own lunch. At rest stops, the first task is ensuring horses are watered and tethered in shade, with bridles taken out so they can munch on grass. Evenings are devoted to games and campfire conversations. On a rest day midway through the trip, youngsters swam and played in the fast-running, icy current under a bridge over Big Creek.

“It teaches [youth] independence, about culture and about our connection to horses. The only thing they don’t like is the 11 pm curfew and the 6 am wakeup call,” says Pam Quilt, a Xeni Gwet’in youth worker and volunteer.

John Lehmann's photos:

Mr. Lulua says the trip builds bridges – between young and old people, old and new ways and people and horses. It also connects neighbours and communities. One key player is Roy Mulvahill, a third generation rancher from the B.C. ranching district of Chezacut – his ancestors came from Ireland – who provides wagons and horses and carries a sheaf of photographs from past years’ rides that show no-nos such as riders straying on to the wrong side of the road. Visual reminders work better than lectures, he says.

Mr. Mulvahill and his wife Gwen also provide several ‘kid horses’ – ones docile enough for the youngest child or greenest rider to manage.

Mr. Mulvahill has the weathered hands of an outdoorsman and is missing the tip of his left index finger, having lost it to the bite of a rambunctious colt. He doesn’t find anything especially remarkable about the ride, reminding a reporter that in decades past, he and other ranchers would routinely drive up to 600 head of cattle to town for auction in the fall, timing the drives so they would arrive for Halloween.

Cattle are now transported by truck.

“When we are coming down that hill, we are telling people something about who we are.”

Jimmy Lulua, wagon trip founder

Conway Lulua, a cousin of Jimmy Lulua, is riding an Appaloosa called Winchester and has also been on the ride several times.

“It changes people in a good way,” Conway says. “I used to be an alcoholic, I used to be a heavy drinker and a heavy pot smoker. Since going on the ride, I’m not doing that any more. It’s a good life, being sober.

“For me, it’s almost like going into treatment.

Skyryder Moses, 17, is from the Sugarcane reserve near Williams Lake and was invited to come on the ride by a friend from Xeni Gwet’in. Mr. Moses, 17, just finished Grade 11 and this year traveled to Ottawa on a Rotary-sponsored Adventures in Citizenship Program, in which he thinks he was the only First Nations kid in a group of about 200 students across the country.

So he appreciates being part of a First Nations family gathering.



“I think it’s great,” Mr. Moses says of the ride. “All the people here love to laugh and tell stories and have a good time and they’ve been really good to me.”

Jimmy Lulua, who was named after an uncle skilled with horses, says he’s gratified by the community support the event has received. When he’s felt discouraged or had doubts about the event, he turned for advice to elders, who told him to trust himself and keep going.

“I was always told that I would do something great with horses,” he says, sitting cross legged during a rest stop in Farwell Canyon.

“To me, this is something great with horses.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/youth-wagon-ride/article25119694/>

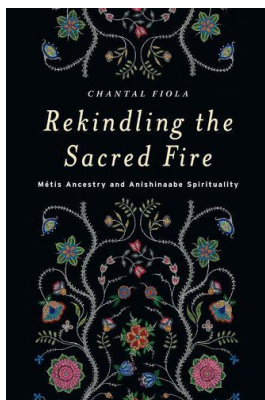
## **My Métis: struggle to define term reveals multiple meanings**

Reviewed by: Joel Boyce

Posted: **06/27/2015 3:00 AM** | Last Modified: 06/27/2015 12:40 PM |

While the jacket copy and title itself suggest a fairly specific topic of study, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire* actually serves as an excellent, albeit challenging, primer on the who, what and why of the Métis in Manitoba and elsewhere.

For author Chantal Fiola, a descendant of the historic Red River Métis Nation and an academic working and teaching at the University of Manitoba, there has always been a missing piece. Many Manitoba Métis families were traditionally -- at least nominally -- Catholic, but many modern Métis, including Fiola herself and a dozen or so interview subjects, have rediscovered the spiritual beliefs and practices of their indigenous sides only in recent decades.





Even here, in the historic birthplace of the Métis nation, there is often significant confusion over who is and is not Métis -- what is and is not a part of Métis culture -- partly because there isn't always a single answer. The word literally means "mixed," as in those with both European and indigenous Canadian parentage, but the Manitoba Metis Federation is just one group that tends to emphasize the historical origins and the unique culture that appeared near the Red River Colony in the 1800s rather than the (mostly irrelevant) genetics involved.

After all, a modern-day Ojibwa woman who happens to have children with a French-Canadian man won't likely find their children spontaneously dancing the Red River jig. But a person descended from that historic nation might have had at least some of those traditions passed on to them.

This is a scholarly work with a lengthy bibliography, but it manages to raise hackles and goosebumps in turn. We hear of indigenous women learning from a young age to hide in a ditch when a car drives by because of the ever-present threat of sexual assault, of the plight of Métis and non-Status Indians who suffered abuse in residential schools, but were specifically excluded from the federal government's apology to survivors.

While scholarship on Métis issues is growing, the existing quantity of material is small compared to similar work on First Nations. To compensate for areas where Métis-specific studies are lacking, Fiola deftly draws on a wide range of other work. She cites studies of American mixed-race citizens, comparing U.S. blood quantum laws (which distinguished between negroes and mulattoes) to Canadian ones (which were similarly divisive of Indians and half-breeds). And she describes the similar experiences of First Nations and Métis -- for example, the government's use of the child welfare system during the 1960s as a tool to destroy indigenous culture.

Where the book really comes to life is in the words of the interview subjects of her book. They clearly demonstrate the diversity of a unique ethnicity whose political identity is solidifying but whose lived experiences have run the gamut from white Canadians ignoring or denying any aboriginal heritage to those consciously and proudly Michif to Anishinaabe who just happen to have a few European ancestors.

Fiola's subjects do speak on spirituality, however at least as much of the book is spent on historical context, identity politics, racism, genocide, and other meaty topics. The most

interesting part of the book is hearing, in their own words, how being Métis can have very subtle or very significant effects on the way a person perceives herself or is perceived by others.

The book and its subjects seem to affirm that even a trodden-on people can stand up and claim the right to define themselves.

Joel Boyce is a Winnipeg writer and teacher who is Métis.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/books/my-metis-310248791.html>

## Racially charged editorial angers First Nations chief



Ben Miljure, CTV Winnipeg  
Published Sunday, June 28, 2015 5:18PM CST  
Last Updated Sunday, June 28, 2015 5:35PM CST

A number of people have been angered by a racially charged editorial appearing in the most recent edition of an independent newspaper.

“Read the article and I’m totally appalled at his remarks,” said Chief Jim Bear of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

Former provincial court judge Bill Marantz wrote the opinion piece which includes repeated use of the outdated term ‘Indian’.

It also accuses First Nations chiefs of not addressing social issues.

“The so-called leaders of the aboriginal community are too busy feathering their own headaddresses to worry about trivialities like chronic unemployment, poverty, illness, alcoholism, and crime,” reads the editorial.

"As a chief, I'd like to let him know that I'm working more than full-time. 24/7," said Chief Bear who questions why the paper chose to run such an inflammatory editorial to begin with.

"I allow my writers, particularly this writer, who is very provocative, a great deal of leeway," said Bernie Bellan, the paper's publisher.

In the editorial, Marantz takes aim at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which he calls a waste of time, and he does so with particularly charged terms.

"Any "Canadian" (Indian code for "paleface") who is unaware of the abuses of the Residential School System, at this stage of the game, just hasn't been paying attention for the last 50 years," it reads.

Marantz makes no apologies for his use of the outdated term 'Indian'.

"It's not accurate, they're not Indians, it was a mistake when they first used it but everybody knows it now and everybody uses it," says Marantz. "And there's a hundred first nations and they have all kinds of different names and everything else."

Bellan says he regrets publishing the editorial without making changes first.

"I have been contacted by people within the Jewish community and in the aboriginal community expressing quite a bit of disappointment and more than that about this article," said Bellan. "So I will be addressing that myself in the next issue."

Bellan has also offered an indigenous scholar the opportunity to write the editorial for the next edition of the paper.

The Jewish Post and News is partially funded by the federal government through the Canada Periodicals Fund.

**Direct Link:** <http://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/racially-charged-editorial-angers-first-nations-chief-1.2444674>

## **Crossing the line separating First Nations from others**

Jessica Barrett / Vancouver Courier  
June 30, 2015 09:23 AM



Members of First Nations communities and their supporters hit the streets en masse for the 2013 Truth and Reconciliation Walk. Photo: Rebecca Blissett

It was the eve of National Aboriginal Day, and a bald eagle sat high atop a tree overlooking Stanley Park's Malkin Bowl.

The symbol was not lost on the concert-goers who alerted each other to this sentry, who, like us, settled in for the show.

It was perfect, considering the lineup: Ottawa's A Tribe Called Red, whose [mix of traditional powwow chants and electronic music](#) is some of the most innovative sound coming out of this country. Supported by Vancouver's blonde-haired, blue-eyed Blondtron and her racially diverse band of booty-shaking backup dancers, and the traditional aboriginal Git Hayetsk Dancers, the whole night seemed a fitting representation of West Coast diversity — complete with a distinct racial divide as impermeable as it was subtle.

At first, looking at the crowd gave me that warm, fuzzy feeling familiar to those who pride themselves on being part of Canada's multicultural makeup. I've never been at a mainstream event in Vancouver headlined by an aboriginal act, and I've seldom seen such a strong representation of aboriginal people in the crowd — almost 50 per cent. But then I noticed how we self-segregated. People clung to their own kind, standing right next to, but worlds apart from each other; distinct and separate tiles in the cultural mosaic.

Race is a topic that makes Canadians profoundly uncomfortable. While our neighbours to the south have robust and messy conversations about race and racism — especially in the midst of their unfolding crisis — here, we shy away from this entirely. We are so worried about offending each other that we rarely talk about our differences at all, save to celebrate the multicultural-ness that has formed the core of an otherwise vague national identity. Nowhere is this more evident than how we speak about and to First Peoples, or rather, don't.

All decent people are rightly horrified by the stories of residential school survivors, of missing and murdered women, of deplorable living conditions on reserves. We shake our heads at the statistics and stories of the disproportionate amount of aboriginal people in

prisons and in foster care. We are appalled by revelations of past wrongs — government condoned science experiments on aboriginal children, for instance. Good God.

But I don't think we know what to do with this information, how to let it sink into and change our everyday interactions. At least, I don't. I feel paralyzed by the scope and scale of the grief, shame, guilt and horror. Unlike other marginalized groups of whom I consider myself a proud ally — for example LGBTQ people or other visible minorities — I don't have a lot of contact with First Nations people in my everyday life. Just writing this makes me feel uncomfortable. It challenges my perception of myself as a culturally sensitive, inclusive person. Because I know if I delve into the conscious and unconscious choices that have formed my social circles, I'll have to confront my own bias, my own discrimination. To be brutally honest, I probably avoid First Nations people because I don't know how to talk to them about their experience of, well, being First Nations. Or even if I should. And I don't know where to turn for guidance.

It's really hopeful to see a movement among educators to include the stories of residential schools in curricula. I am glad our children will learn about this history the way I learned about the Chinese head tax, Japanese internment and the Komagata Maru. Perhaps that will help future generations bridge the gap that seems to exist between Canadians of various immigrant backgrounds and our first peoples, who, absurdly, are cast in the role of the ultimate Other.

But what about those of us who are long out of the classroom? Where can we learn?

In Vancouver, we are very [good about giving lip service](#) to First Nations. We proudly display Haida art at the airport. We start every carnival, picnic and community meeting with the acknowledgement that we are on Unceded Coast Salish Territory. But we rarely unpack these words, discuss what they really mean and what, if anything, we might do about it. Without that, they ring hollow — just a rote uttering to assuage white liberal guilt. We have so much work to do because the real test of where we're at as a society is not gauged by official declarations and apologies but when we're squished up against each other in everyday life.

Like when, for example, you're at a concert on the eve of National Aboriginal Day, and the young woman next to you turns to her friends and screams "Happy National Aboriginal Day! We've been waiting for centuries for this, these people don't even know how bad it's been."

And you want to turn to her and say: "You're absolutely right. I don't." But you don't know how to do that, either. So instead you stay silent, and stay on your side of the invisible line that separates you.

- See more at: <http://www.vancourier.com/opinion/crossing-the-line-separating-first-nations-from-others-1.1984289#sthash.FJGq85tt.dpuf>

# Indigenous People Eschew Canada Day Celebrations

[Hans Tammemagi](#)

7/1/15

It's Canada Day north of the 49th Parallel, when bands play, fireworks light the sky, maple leaf flags flutter proudly in the breeze, and barbeques send tantalizing smells wafting into the summer heat.

The national holiday marks the anniversary of the July 1, 1867, passage of the British North America Act uniting three colonies into the country called Canada, and is a day of celebration across the land. But for many indigenous people, July 1 will be a day of rest, not of celebration. Indigenous people in Canada largely consider themselves Natives first and Canadians second. Furthermore, cynicism runs deep, making for widespread indifference to Canada Day.

"We don't think about Canada Day one way or another," said Johnna Sparrow-Crawford, Musqueam First Nation. "We don't really recognize it, and enjoy it as a statutory holiday, a day off."

Aboriginal Tourism B.C. is not planning anything official to mark Canada Day either.

"I am both Native and Canadian, but Native first," said Paula Amos, Squamish First Nation and Communications Manager for Aboriginal Tourism B.C. "To me, National Aboriginal Day is more important than Canada Day. However, Canada Day offers an opportunity to educate [non-Native] people. Thus it's important for us to have a role in the day, to gain leverage."

Likewise, no Canada Day celebrations are planned at Ucluelet First Nation on the west side of Vancouver Island. There, National Aboriginal Day is considered more important. As a post-treaty nation, however, which since 2011 is self-governing rather than controlled by the federal Indian and Northern Affairs department, the Ucluelet consider their treaty implementation day as the most important of all. This anniversary is celebrated on September 21.

A sense of disillusionment is not surprising, given that indigenous peoples have historically been badly underrepresented in Canada's parliament and thus have been barely able to contribute to the political nation-building exercise. The most famous elected Native was Louis Riel, who sought to preserve the rights and culture of the Métis during the encroachment of Europeans into Manitoba and the west in the 1800s. Riel was elected three times to the Canadian House of Commons, but because he was considered a criminal, he never sat. In 1885, he was hung. As a traitor for leading a Métis rebellion.



Elijah Harper, Ojibwa-Cree, was another noted Native politician. In 1990, as Manitoba's lone aboriginal member of the legislature, he held an eagle feather in his hand and steadfastly opposed the Meech Lake Accord—a constitutional amendment to gain Quebec's acceptance of the Constitution Act. The accord had been negotiated without the consultation of First Nations, and Harper's stance permanently derailed the accord.

Both these men were heroes to their people, contributing enormously to raising the role of aboriginal peoples in Canada. Non-Natives, however, saw them in a completely different light.

To be sure, there have been some gains. Political representation has improved in recent years. A record seven aboriginals were elected in the May 2011 federal election, representing 2.3 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons (aboriginals form 3.8 per cent of the population). In the Senate, however, the situation still lags badly as only 15 indigenous people have been appointed since confederation in 1867.

A glimmer of hope for national understanding emerged with the June 2 release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report labeling the residential schools program as "cultural genocide." The report, which calls for an ambitious overhaul of the entire relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians, offers far-reaching recommendations, with a dash of optimism about the future.

"The Truth and Reconciliation report brings absolute certainty to history and the difficulties aboriginals faced," said Keith Henry, Métis, and CEO of Aboriginal Tourism B.C. "We need to encourage governments. It's easy to be cynical, but it's better to be positive and build a real partnership."

*Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/07/01/indigenous-people-eschew-canada-day-celebrations-160917>*

## **Aboriginal Inequality & Poverty**

### **A Foot in the Door: 'Status' Key to Indigenous Housing**

Off-reserve support just out of reach for some aboriginal urbanites. Latest in a series.

By [Katie Hyslop](#), 26 Jun 2015, TheTyee.ca



With a full-time, above minimum-wage job, Vancouver single mom Kerrigan might not seem like an obvious candidate for social housing. But with market rents running to half her income -- way above standards of 'affordability' -- her other options are few. Photo by Katie Hyslop.

*[Editor's note: Affordable housing used to be an [accepted right](#) in Canada. For many it's increasingly out of reach -- a silent national crisis. In this election-year [series](#) the Tyee Solutions Society looks at what's failed, and how it can be fixed.]*

"It's ironic, because I'm trying to help women who are homeless when I'm homeless myself," said Kim Kerrigan. The Vancouver child and youth worker, 37, has been unable to find a suitable apartment since she moved from Prince Rupert, B.C., last August.

For four months Kerrigan, her teenage son, Isaac, their dog Zoe, and Robbie the cat lived in a trailer in Kerrigan's sister's backyard. By Christmas the menagerie moved in with Kerrigan's mom, sharing a bedroom.

"[My son] kind of floats: he sometimes sleeps on the couch, sometimes on my mom's bed when she's not home, or on my bed if I'm not staying home," she said. It "isn't cool," she feels, for a 16 year-old to have to sleep on the couch.

Kerrigan has a full-time job earning \$21 an hour. But with the average two-bedroom unit in Vancouver commanding \$1,571 a month, she'd have to pay almost half her income in rent -- well above the 30 per cent that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation considers affordable.

She still might stretch to the rent, if she could only find a place that allows a dog and a cat. Kerrigan won't consider giving them away: "They're my babies. Especially my dog: she would be absolutely devastated."

The Kerrigans are members of the Haida First Nation. Their fellow band members with Indian Act "status" living on Haida Gwaii reserves receive housing funding from the federal government. Once a status First Nations person leaves the reserve, they lose the right to those funds.

If you're non-status First Nations, Inuit, or Metis, it doesn't matter where you live: your housing is your problem. Kim, her mother and siblings lost their status when Kim's grandmother married their grandfather, a non-First Nations man.

A little over four per cent of Canada's population is indigenous (that number is Statistics Canada's most recent estimate, now four years old). Yet depending on city and [study](#), 11 to an astonishing 96 per cent of urban homeless identify themselves as indigenous.

More than half of Canada's Aboriginal people lived off reserve in 2011. Their situation may get worse before it gets better. Scores of agreements that support existing indigenous urban housing across Canada are running out. Groups providing that housing are being forced to scale back, raise money in other ways -- or get out of business entirely.

### **Lengthening wait-lists**

Kerrigan has applied for several provincial housing assistance programs, but the current average wait time for people who aren't actually on the streets is about 18 months.

Kerrigan has also sought help from the Aboriginal Housing Management Association, which oversees subsidized urban indigenous housing in the province on behalf of BC Housing and smaller providers. It has wait lists years, not months, long.

Soon those could be much longer. The Association's housing was funded through federal mortgage and operating agreements signed for terms of 25 to 40 years. The agreements funded administration and paid subsidies to keep rents below market. Across Canada they created just over 10,000 urban indigenous housing units.

But those deals expire when the mortgages are paid off, leaving housing providers with significantly lower budgets. No new federal money has gone into off-reserve housing since a one-time lump-sum [payment](#) in 2008. By 2014, 41 per cent of agreements supporting urban indigenous housing in Canada had expired. Another 20 per cent expire by 2018.



Vancouver's Skwachays Lodge: Innovation, as decades-old federal support for off-reserve aboriginal housing expires. Photo courtesy Skwachays Lodge.

In British Columbia, almost 2,000 units received subsidies in 2011. By next year that will drop to 1,900. It falls to 1,350 in 2021. To zero by 2030.

"That is a lot of low income families that will be displaced in the coming years," said Ray Gerow, Aboriginal Housing Management Association CEO.

It's similar in Ontario, where Don McBain, executive director of the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Society, predicts 2,000 units will be lost in a province that only has one per cent of social housing for its 2.2 per cent indigenous population.

More than eight thousand people could be left homeless. But they're not McBain's only concern. There's also the millions of wasted dollars. "If you look at re-investment, it costs \$200,000 a unit to build," said McBain. It makes more sense financially to save the units than build new ones.

## **Identity and rights**

Canada's federal government maintains it has no obligation to provide housing to off-reserve, non-status First Nations, Metis, or Inuit people. Section six of the Indian Act, they argue, determines who the Act says is "entitled" to status, and therefore who is entitled to treaty benefits like education, land, and housing.

But that long-standing position is open to challenge. This fall the Supreme Court of Canada will hear a case first brought against the then-Liberal government in 1998 by then-Congress of Aboriginal People's National Chief Harry Daniels.

Daniels was a Metis man from Saskatchewan, fighting for federal recognition of indigenous identity for Metis, Inuit, and non-status First Nations people. Daniels died in 2004, but his case continues. The Congress' current National Chief, Betty Ann Lavallee, insists the suit is less about treaty benefits than reclaiming identity. "The fact is, we are Aboriginal peoples," said, Lavallee, a non-status member of the Migmaw nation in New Brunswick.

Nevertheless, a court victory could confirm that non-status Metis, Inuit, and First Nations people also enjoy treaty entitlements -- including housing. Even so, it would likely be years before both sides agreed on exactly who gets rights and what those are.

Gerow's not willing to wait. "I don't hang up my rights on the hook at the front door of the band office when I leave [the reserve]," he objects.

So, with academic partner Professor Margot Young, he's recruited six students from the University of British Columbia's law school to find fresh legal grounds to establish federal responsibility for off-reserve indigenous housing, regardless of status.

The students, mostly indigenous first-years, have already prepared a backgrounder on indigenous rights in Canada's constitution. "The next step," said Young, "will be to think a little more outside the box about ways that backdrop can be useful," in expanding rights for those living off-reserve.

### **Leverage and enterprise**

Gerow insists that expanding federal responsibility wouldn't necessarily invite demands for a lot of new funding. It could simply mean allowing First Nations to spend funds they already receive beyond their reserve limits.

Or perhaps they could leverage federal contributions with resources from other sources such as municipalities. For example if the federal government gave them \$10 million for a housing project, said Gerow, "We would take that \$10 million and leverage that [into] something that can house three times the amount of people."

The providers Gerow's Association works with are also exploring new ideas. Some are selling units to indigenous clients who are ready to take on a mortgage. Others are starting for-profit businesses whose revenue funds non-profit housing.

One opened a boutique art hotel. Skwachays Lodge and art gallery subsidizes Vancouver Native Housing's 24 non-profit live/work studios for indigenous artists in the same building.

But social enterprises won't save smaller providers of housing whose volunteer boards already struggle with burn out, warns Ontario's McBain. They'd be better off to turn their management over or amalgamate with larger operations for efficiencies of scale. His Ontario Aboriginal Housing Society, for example, manages buildings once belonging to 11 smaller providers.

**Good riddance to subsidies?** In fact, while some want federal subsidies renewed, McBain says he's glad to see them go. "If you're in your 24th year of [a 25-year] subsidy agreement, your portfolio is basically 95 per cent equity. And you can't borrow against it as long as you're getting the subsidy," he said.

Among other things, that makes it harder for the buildings' owners to finance needed mid-life renovations.

Instead, McBain thinks federal funding should make up the difference between what provinces provide people in greatest need -- those on welfare or disability -- for rent, and what shelter actually costs in their marketplace.

Ontario's government has promised to pass along five per cent of funding it receives through the federal Affordable Housing Strategy for more affordable off-reserve housing units.

"[Housing providers are] still going to have to work really hard," McBain said, "because you're still going to have to administer that and [the federal government] are not providing you any administrative dollars or any client training dollars. But at least they're giving [housing providers] the option to continue providing deep core housing."

With a full-time, above minimum-wage job, Vancouver single mom Kerrigan might not seem like an obvious candidate for social housing. But with market rents running to half her income -- way above standards of "affordability" -- her other options are few.

She continues to hunt for safe, suitable and affordable accommodation for her and her kids, human and otherwise. The sooner the better: no 37-year-old maintains their sanity for long when they live at mom's. "I probably should have moved out a couple of months ago," she laughed.

More off-reserve indigenous housing geared toward families like hers would help, but getting it will take new degrees of cooperation between all levels of government -- including indigenous ones. 🍷

**Direct Link:** <http://thetyee.ca/News/2015/06/26/Status-Indigenous-Housing/>

## Aboriginal Politics

### Kenora NDP candidate promises fresh approach to First Nations



Former Kenora NDP MPP Howard Hampton has been nominated to run for the NDP on the federal stage.

Jon Thompson, [tbnewswatch.com](http://tbnewswatch.com)

Howard Hampton is officially returning to politics, promising to improve the beleaguered relationship between Canada and First Nations.

The former leader of Ontario's NDP captured the federal Kenora Riding nomination on Friday night over first-time hopeful Peter Edwards.

For the last seven months, Hampton has served as NDP Leader Tom Mulcair's special advisor on the Ring of Fire, meeting with First Nations across Northern Ontario. Pointing to Neskantaga First Nation, which has been under a boil-water advisory since 1995, Hampton said the Conservative government has failed to make strategic investments to build "respectful and meaningful" relationships with remote communities.

"You can't say to Neskantaga First Nation on the one hand, 'we want to work with you to develop the Ring of Fire but oh, by the way, we couldn't care less whether you have safe, clean drinking water,' he said. "The Harper gang has made those relationships worse."

From the oil industry in Alberta to the resource industry in Northern Ontario, Hampton said he's hearing a chorus of business leaders rallying around a progressive evolution in environmental and First Nations policies. He believes renewing those relationships is not only morally responsible but the only route to developing Northern Ontario's estimated \$250-billion in untapped natural resources.

"To develop even part of that -- I'm not suggesting it all be developed -- we all have to sit down and work cooperatively and respectfully with the First Nations of the Northwest. My point is this: instead of ignoring the issues that First Nations raise, my commitment is to work cooperatively and respectfully with First Nations so that we're all better off; so that we can have some meaningful jobs; so that the First Nations communities will have some hope of self-sufficiency and opportunity; and so that all people will have better opportunities and job prospects into the future."

Hampton will face incumbent Kenora Conservative MP Greg Rickford and former Liberal MP Bob Nault in October's election.

**Direct Link:**

[http://www.tbnewswatch.com/News/372713/Kenora\\_NDP\\_candidate\\_promises\\_fresh\\_approach\\_to\\_First\\_Nations](http://www.tbnewswatch.com/News/372713/Kenora_NDP_candidate_promises_fresh_approach_to_First_Nations)

## **The aboriginal vote: Can indigenous Canadians swing the election?**

[Lee Berthiaume, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: June 28, 2015 | Last Updated: June 28, 2015 6:13 PM EDT





National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Perry Bellegarde takes part in the planting of a heart garden during the closing ceremony of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, at Rideau Hall earlier in June.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip believes there has been a political awakening among aboriginals. And the influential head of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs hopes that when the votes are counted in October, aboriginals will have played a key role in kicking the Conservatives from power.

The Assembly of First Nations has argued in recent weeks that if indigenous voters turn out en masse in October, they could influence the results in as many as 51 federal ridings. If so, amid early predictions of a minority government, those voters could play a significant role in deciding which party takes power.

High aboriginal turnout would normally seem far-fetched. But Phillip and others argue indigenous voters are more motivated now than ever, thanks to their perceptions of how the Conservative government has treated them.



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. Stuart Davis / PNG

“This in all likelihood is the most important federal election in a very, very long time,” Phillip says. “And in that regard, I would hope First Nations people realize that, and

know and understand how important it is to exercise their right to register a vote for the party of their choice.”

Voter turnout among aboriginals has always trailed non-aboriginals. Exact figures are hard to nail down, in part because it’s difficult to determine how many aboriginals living in urban centres actually cast ballots. But turnout on reserves has been between 15 and 20 per cent less than that of the general population since 2004.

Aboriginals are less likely to vote than non-aboriginal Canadians for a number of reasons. Partly it’s a historic distrust and refusal to acknowledge what many indigenous people see as a foreign government. But there are also more practical barriers, such as poverty, lack of education, and lack of awareness.

“When you don’t feel part of a system, when you don’t feel part of a society, you don’t feel you want to go out and vote,” says AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde. “And you’re not going to be concerned about voting and politics when you’re looking for a place to live, when you’re trying to put food on the table.”



Assembly of First Nations national Chief Perry Bellegarde. Adrian Wyld / THE CANADIAN PRESS

But Bellegarde says there’s also a growing realization that by not voting, aboriginals make it easier for governments of all stripes and at all levels to ignore their concerns and demands.

“Even talking to some members of Parliament, if they know there’s low voter turnout among First Nations people, they’re not helping get (the MPs) elected,” he says. “Therefore First Nations people’s issues aren’t a priority for them. That’s the reality out there, and people are starting to see that.”

The AFN has been actively working to get out the vote on Oct. 19. It has partnered with Elections Canada on several fronts to raise awareness and inform aboriginals of how to vote. It has also been encouraging First Nations chiefs across the country to take a leadership role and encourage their people to vote.

These efforts have taken on increased importance following the Conservative government's election-law reforms last year, which eliminated the practice of vouching that many indigenous voters had relied on to cast their ballots because of a lack of proper identification.

"It's almost like voter suppression," Bellegarde says of the new election law. "Our the biggest fear is it will be another obstacle or challenge to get the First Nations' vote out, because a lot of people on reserve don't have addresses. There's no street addresses on reserves. They're using boxes."

The AFN is a non-partisan organization, and Bellegarde is careful not to endorse one party or another.

"I'm not out to get the Conservatives. I'm not out to put in place the Liberals. I'm not out to put in place the NDP or the Greens. I just want to make sure our people are aware there is an election. I want our people to make an informed decision as they move forward to that ballot box."

But Bellegarde adds that aboriginals "want a government that will work with First Nations people." That includes respecting land treaties, increasing investments in education and training "and even basic fundamental human rights like potable water.

"Who apologized for the residential schools?" he says. "That was Prime Minister Harper. Well what happened in the last seven years? Not much. We've had cutbacks in a lot of program areas ... So if you're looking for anything of substance from this Conservative government, there really hasn't been anything."



Idle No More protesters march to Parliament Hill in December 2013. Jean Levac / Ottawa Citizen/Postmedia News

The Conservative government is widely credited — or blamed, depending on your perspective — for the apparent surge in political interest among aboriginals. This can be

traced back to two omnibus bills introduced in 2012, Bills C-38 and C-45, which removed some protections for forests and waterways.

The Idle No More movement in December 2012 grew out of opposition to those bills and a belief the legislation violated indigenous rights over their own land. While Idle No More has since receded into the background, the anger and frustration that birthed it continue to simmer.

“Not everybody was involved in Idle No More,” says NDP aboriginal affairs critic Niki Ashton, whose northern Manitoba riding is among those with the most aboriginal voters in the country. “But there was an incredible politicization that took place as a result, and it has only built up since then.”



NDP MP Niki Ashton. Sean Kilpatrick / THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ashton says she has seen a “groundswell” of aboriginals angry with the government who are planning to vote. That includes “sovereignists” who have previously refused to vote. “People are saying this election is different, that there’s too much at stake,” she says.

Of the 51 ridings where the AFN says aboriginal and registered Indian voters could influence the results, the Conservatives currently hold more than 20. Those include six in Ontario, three in Manitoba, seven in Saskatchewan and several more in B.C. Not all will switch hands. But if they did, which party would benefit?

A senior Liberal official acknowledged that, as a whole, aboriginal voters are “incredibly important for us.” The Liberals analyzed which ridings such voters could have influence, and will be targeting those the party feels it could actually win on Oct. 19. It also hopes to field up to 20 aboriginal candidates.

However, the Liberals face a challenge. On the surface, they and the NDP appear similar. Both have promised an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women, to abide by a UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and to work with indigenous peoples on a “nation-to-nation” basis.

But unlike the NDP, the Liberals voted in favour of the Conservative government's sweeping new security laws, Bill C-51, this past spring. Many aboriginal leaders and activists vocally opposed the legislation, saying it would let Canada's security agencies crack down on dissent within the country.

The Liberals have also been more amenable to natural resource projects such as the oilsands and pipelines, which many aboriginal Canadians strongly oppose. Many also still remember previous Liberal governments that refused to listen to their concerns and in fact, they argue, contributed to their current societal problems.

Then there are the numbers. A January 2013 analysis of Elections Canada data by polling website ThreeHundredEight.com found the NDP the clear winner among voters on reserves during the 2011 election, with 43-per-cent support. That was 12 points higher than their support among the general population.

In contrast, the Conservatives captured 37 per cent of the aboriginal vote, which was three points less than their general vote. The Liberals got 12 per cent, seven points less than their general vote. (The results weren't definitive as the data included some polling stations where non-aboriginals would have voted as well.)

The NDP also has an edge anecdotally. Chief Carl Tuesday of the Big Grassy River First Nation near Kenora, Ont., says he doesn't know how he will vote on Oct. 19. His local MP is Natural Resources Minister Greg Rickford, but Tuesday says he believes the NDP has been more receptive to aboriginal concerns.

Asked how he'll vote, Phillip pauses for a second. "Let me put it this way," he says. "On the night of the election, I'll be sitting in a chair in front of my TV with a can of Orange Crush in my hand."

## **Voter Turnout (%)**

	Aboriginal voters on reserve	National turnout	Difference
2011	44.8	61.1	16.3
2008	42.4	58.8	16.4
2006	48.8	64.7	15.9
2004	40.3	60.9	20.6

— *Elections Canada*

### **On-reserve turnout by province and territory in 2011**

National	44.8
----------	------

Newfoundland & Labrador	31.3
Prince Edward Island	58.2
Nova Scotia	49.5
New Brunswick	44.5
Quebec	30.2
Ontario	46.3
Manitoba	37.6
Saskatchewan	46.4
Alberta	32.8
British Columbia	48.6
Yukon	69.2
Northwest Territories	46.7
Nunavut*	—

\* There are no First Nations reserves identified in Nunavut

— *Elections Canada*

**Direct Link:** <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/the-aboriginal-vote-can-indigenous-canadians-swing-the-election>

## **New Alberta AFN regional chief says treaties guaranteed resource revenue sharing**

[National News](#) | June 29, 2015 by [Brandi Morin](#) |



**Brandi Morin****APTN National News**

The newly elected Alberta Assembly of First Nations regional Chief Craig Mackinaw is ready to tackle his new role starting July 1.

Current regional leader Chief Cameron Alexis did not seek re-election this term as he stepped down to care for his wife who is ill with cancer.

Mackinaw, from Ermineskin Cree Nation in Maskwacis, spent 18 years as a band councillor and then served as chief of the First Nation for two years. Within those two years he also served as grand chief of the Confederacy of Treaty Six.

He was elected at the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs gathering in Edmonton this past May and said he is confident his previous experience in politics will help him represent Alberta First Nations.

“I have a good idea of what’s going on and what work needs to be done,” said Mackinaw.

Some of his top priorities will be calling for action on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, addressing education gaps, child welfare issues, health inequities and resource revenue sharing.

Mackinaw believes revenue sharing could be the answer to solving social and economic issues plaguing many First Nations. Alberta makes billions of dollars of profits off natural resource development and its First Nations should be making a cut of them.

Alberta chiefs conducted a study several years ago which revealed that if First Nations received only 5 per cent of provincial resource revenues they would be more than capable of financial independence.

“Revenue sharing would help the bands in providing services to their members. It could help in having another funding source separate from AANDC dollars. If the governments work with us it will be beneficial for everyone.”



Chiefs in Alberta have been pushing the topic of resource revenue sharing for several years. In 2011 they took the issue to Prime Minister Stephen Harper who advised the chiefs to take it back to the province.

Then in a 2013 meeting between chiefs and former Alberta Aboriginal Relations Minister Robin Campbell, chiefs requested the province consider resource revenue sharing. The answer was “no.” Campbell referenced that First Nations benefit from revenues like any other Albertans and said in an interview with the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society that, “we’re not going to take a share of our resource revenues and give it to First Nations.”

But it’s about implementing the original intent of Treaty’s, said Mackinaw and it’s a dispute he will continue to push to resolve.

“In regards to Treaty agreements the government needs to work with us on fulfilling their end. There’s some unfinished business that needs to be discussed and we need to bring those items to the table to agree on moving ahead.”

Alberta chiefs believe their Treaty equates to revenue sharing, as they never signed away all of their resources.

“The way it (Natural Resource Transfer Act) was set up and drafted in 1923, by the Province of Alberta regarding all our oil and gas, timber and mining and all the various industries fall underneath that. When it was drafted they didn’t consult with us. That’s where part of our problem with, especially oil and gas, there’s no revenue sharing. We should be having revenue sharing,” said Mackinaw.

He is hopeful the new Alberta NDP government will sit down to discuss the issue.

“It’s a wait and see what happens. Hopefully what they’re saying and what we’re reading in the news will be followed through on. Myself, I’m waiting to see. I guess we will see within the next year how they stand and how they’re going to work with us.”

**Direct Link:** <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/06/29/new-alberta-afn-regional-chief-says-treaties-guaranteed-resource-revenue-sharing/>

## **Adam: The national chief's conflict of interest**

[Mohammed Adam](#)

Published on: July 2, 2015 | Last Updated: July 2, 2015 10:26 PM EDT



Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde is shown in Ottawa after an interview on Monday, Feb. 9, 2015. Justin Tang / THE CANADIAN PRESS

A [report last week](#) that the new national chief of the Assembly of First Nations Perry Bellegarde [has hired](#) his partner Valerie Galley as senior policy adviser is very troubling, to say the least.

In response to a request from the Citizen, the AFN initially had no comment but then CEO Peter Dinsdale wrote, “The National Chief has worked closely with his partner, Valerie, for many years in previous elected leadership capacities. She was a key part of his campaign team for the position of National Chief. And she is a valuable member of the transition team as the National Chief gets established in his role. Valerie’s transition advisory role will come to an end by the end of the year and she will pursue other opportunities outside of the Assembly of First Nations to work with First Nations. Valerie reports to me as the CEO and not to the National Chief.”

After the recent scandals involving outrageous salaries paid to aboriginal leaders and allegations of mishandling of funds, this is not the kind of behaviour one expects from the national chief of the country’s leading First Nations organization. He should not have done it. There is a reason society frowns on people in high public offices hiring family members or friends. It blurs the line between public and private interest, raises questions about honesty and integrity, and undermines public trust in our leaders and institutions.

“Our people are constantly being accused of not being accountable and transparent. If the National Chief feels that he can hire his girlfriend and pay her a salary out of the AFN coffers, this would serve only to heighten criticism that is often levelled at our people,” Chief Ava Hill of Six Nations is quoted [in the Toronto Star](#) as telling Bellegarde. She is right.

APTN [has published](#) her letter and Bellegarde’s response.

The AFN is a [publicly funded organization](#). These taxpayer dollars are meant to pay for the important work the AFN does on behalf of First Nations, and putting the national chief’s partner on the payroll is not one of them. Bellegarde’s inappropriate behaviour

feeds into the perception, rightly or wrongly, that some aboriginal leaders play fast and loose with public funds.

As national chief, Bellegarde should know better, and what's particularly disappointing is that even after acknowledging the hiring was a conflict of interest, his solution is to direct that his partner report to the organization's CEO, and not directly to him, as if that changes anything about the conflict of interest at the heart of the hiring.

Hiring your partner on the public dime is a form of personal aggrandizement that should not be tolerated in any public institution, especially one with so many critical eyes on it like the AFN. It was not too long ago that revelations about some aboriginal chiefs paying themselves obscene salaries shocked and alarmed many Canadians. Having a chief of a reserve of 85 people for instance, [earning more than \\$900,000](#) in one year thanks to an economic development bonus structure, left the impression that some of these are actually in it for the money, and not the welfare of their people.

We all remember the problems and controversy that rocked Attawapiskat, and others like it. Canada's First Nations have serious problems that have to be confronted, everything from poverty to lack of health care, education and above all, lingering racism. The lack of action on the murders of aboriginal women remains a huge problem, and the recent report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission shows that much remains to be done to heal the deep wounds in aboriginal communities. Whatever the solutions are to these deep-seated problems, they would be driven by aboriginal leaders and most certainly will require massive funding.

But these leaders cannot lead the fight for justice for their people if they are tainted in any way by the slightest whiff of impropriety. Their critics – and there are legions of them – will focus on these shortcomings and not the real issues at hand. It is why Bellegarde's hiring of his partner is so counterproductive. It may be good for them as a couple, but it is neither good for the image of the Assembly of First Nations nor the cause for which it stands. Bellegarde should do the right thing and let Galley go.

*Mohammed Adam is an Ottawa writer.*

**Direct Link:** <http://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/adam-the-national-chiefs-conflict-of-interest>

## Aboriginal Sports

**Canadiens' Carey Price wins Vezina Trophy; gives emotional speech on First Nations youth**

By [Justin McElroy](#) Web Producer Global News



**WATCH ABOVE:** While accepting the award that recognizes the best goaltender in the NHL, an emotional Carey Price encouraged First Nations youth to become leaders in their communities.

Montreal Canadiens goaltender Carey Price was a near-unanimous choice as the Vezina Trophy winner on Wednesday – but it was his speech upon receiving the award that will be remembered.

“I would like to take a moment to encourage First Nations youth,” he said.

Price was born in Vancouver, but when he was three his mother, a former chief of the Ulkatcho First Nation, decided to move their family back to her hometown of Anahim Lake in central B.C.

The predominately aboriginal town has just 1,500 people and is 850 kilometres north of Vancouver. To play hockey, Price’s dad would drive – and later fly – his son to Williams Lake, over 300 kilometres away.

“A lot of people would say it’s very improbable that I would make it to this point in my life. I made it here because I wasn’t discouraged. I worked hard to get here, took advantage of every opportunity I had,” said Price.

“I would really like to encourage First Nations youth to be leaders in their communities, be proud of your heritage, and don’t be discouraged from the improbable.”

Price, who also won the Hart Trophy as Most Valuable Player and Ted Lindsay Award as most outstanding player, picked up 27 of 30 first-place votes from the NHL’s general managers.

Pekka Rinne of the Nashville Predators finished second and Devan Dubnyk of the Minnesota Wild third.

Rinne, Dubnyk and the New York Rangers’ Henrik Lundqvist each picked up a first-place vote.

Price was by far the biggest reason the Canadiens finished first in the Atlantic Division.

The 27-year-old went 44-16-6 with a league-best 1.96 goals-against average and .933 save percentage.

**Direct Link:** <http://globalnews.ca/news/2074293/canadiens-carey-price-wins-vezina-trophy-gives-emotional-speech-on-first-nations-youth/>

## Sudbury, Timmins bid for Ontario Aboriginal Summer Games

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 26, 2015 8:38 AM ET Last Updated: Jun 26, 2015 8:38 AM ET



The Ontario Aboriginal Summer Games in 2016 will help prepare athletes for the 2017 North American Indigenous Games (pictured). (Peter Scoular)

Sudbury and Timmins are both bidding to host the first official Ontario Aboriginal Summer Games in 2016.

The event has been developed to help Ontario field a strong team for the North American Indigenous Games. Held every three years, that event aims to improve the quality of life for Indigenous Peoples through sport and culture.

The selection process to send young people to North American games has not had much structure in the past, said Clay Melnike with the Aboriginal Sport and Wellness Council of Ontario.

The Ontario Aboriginal Summer Games will provide a system to ensure all aboriginal athletes in the province get a shot at the larger competition, he added.



Clay Melnike from the Aboriginal Sport and Wellness Council of Ontario says Sudbury and Timmins have both submitted bids to host the first official Ontario Aboriginal Summer Games. (Megan Thomas/CBC)

"It's one that is fair and one that has regional build-up — and that is so important because it gives everyone an equal chance across the province. We are quite excited about that," he said.

Ontario is also bidding to host the North American Indigenous Games in 2017 using the athletic facilities built for next month's Pan Am Games in Toronto, Melnike said.

A decision will be made in July on which city wins the right to host the games, but Melnike said Sudbury may have the edge because of the new watersports centre on Ramsey Lake that is set to open this summer.

"The canoe and kayak venue is really crucial for the summer games. You have the best [venue] now in Canada maybe," he said.

The 2016 event will bring about a thousand athletes to the host city, along with parents and coaches, Melnike said.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/sudbury-timmins-bid-for-ontario-aboriginal-summer-games-1.3128714>

## Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

### Fort McKay Metis and preparing for life after the tar sands

[National News](#) | June 25, 2015 by [Brandi Morin](#)



(The administrative offices in the Fort McKay Metis community that has 90 members and 800 hectares of land in Alberta. Photo: Brandi Morin/APTN)

**Brandi Morin**  
*APTN National News*



**FORT MCKAY METIS COMMUNITY** — New houses and new trucks greet you upon arrival at the Fort McKay Metis community in northern Alberta. It is a small place, a mere dot on the map, located north of Fort McMurray, between the tar sands and next to Fort McKay First Nation.

The Fort McKay Metis is a unique community that was established during the fur trade here in the 1900's.

The people here have close ties with the local First Nation as well as mixed ancestry including French, English, Cree, Dene and Metis.

Encompassing 800 hectares of land and having just under 90 members. it is the only Metis community that was able to negotiate their lands away from the Alberta government.

It is surrounded by industrial development, mainly tar sands activity. The tar sands have had a large impact on the local environment and traditional territories of the Metis.

Most say that for a time, they were ignored when it came to consultation with industry.

The Metis here, like their First Nation neighbours, at one time tried to stop industry from encroaching on their territories with little success.



Fort McKay Metis President Ron Quintal. Photo:Brandi Morin/APTN

“It felt like everything was rubber stamped. Like our concerns were an afterthought,” said President Ron Quintal.

That is until Fort McKay Chief Jim Boucher stepped up and insisted industry also consult with the Metis, he said.

“In Alberta there is no policy or legislation in place that a proponent has to talk to a Metis organization while they talk to the First Nations about the exact same impacts. But we have been able to negotiate deals with industry,” said Quintal.



They are prospering alongside Fort McKay First Nation. The community doesn't receive any government money and is completely self-reliant via business agreements with industry.

Through profits earned from the Fort McKay Metis Group LTD., several initiatives are funded like a beautification program, park building, housing, post-secondary scholarships and local infrastructure.

"I'm about the success of my community and doing the best I can to ensure my community is successful," said Quintal, which he added, includes mitigating environmental concerns.

"We work with industry. We've gone this far and we use our best judgement to ensure industry and government are working sustainably."

Now, Quintal is asking for the ability to hit the brakes on further development. The current down turn in oil prices is an opportunity to look at ways to diversify the economy.

"Everyone is tapping on their brakes and people are taking a step back in terms of how aggressive they want to be in their developments. It's a sobering second look- it gives the community the chance to catch our breath. If oil was to turn the key off tomorrow and go home this community would take at least 20 years to go back to the lifestyle that it had prior because everything around our community, in terms of our traditional territory, is gone."

Quintal said he's terrified by what he's witnessed over the years with the land being eaten up and polluted by industry.

"The fact is we are putting controls in place. We have three air monitoring systems in the community at all times. Everything is under scrutiny. Do I think it's all industry's fault? There's a good case against that."

But, it's not just environmental impacts that came with the economic boom train, social issues add additional challenges.

"Many here are living with addictions. Because the money is everywhere. We have 18 year old kids, graduating high school with opportunity. They go to work and drive heavy haulers and suddenly make \$100,000 a year."

Quintal acknowledges that time is running out. They have money now, but the land is being destroyed and they may not have a place to call home in the near future.

They are already planning ahead however, given the circumstances, to create a new vision for the coming generations.

Recognizing the dilemma the Fort McKay Metis is buying land in Isle La Crosse Saskatchewan- an area with a high density of Metis people. It will be a place for the people to go to if Fort McKay ends up being swallowed up by industry.

“We don’t have any sanctuaries to go to, but we’re buying lots to build some cabins and a lodge to be able to take our people away if they want to. There they can fish, hunt, pick berries and go back to nature,” said Quintal.

Regardless of the challenges before them, the people will continue to take advantage of economic opportunities while they still can, said Quintal.



Homes under construction in the Fort McKay Metis community. Photo: Brandi Morin/APTN

“What we need in Alberta is a policy that will enable the Metis the ability to be more engaged... That’s not to say we want to stop industry. We want to use the best technology possible, to know where you’re (industry) going to be working within our traditional territory. And we want the opportunity to continue make money off of the projects.”

**Direct Link:** <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/06/25/fort-mckay-metis-preparing-for-life-after-the-tar-sands/>

## **Yukon First Nations still considering Bill S-6 lawsuit**

### **Council of Yukon First Nations not ruling out legal challenge over federal law**

By Nancy Thomson, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 30, 2015 12:08 PM CT Last Updated: Jun 30, 2015 12:08 PM CT

Yukon First Nations say they're still considering whether to launch a legal challenge of Bill S-6.

The controversial federal legislation amending the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act was passed earlier this month.



Ruth Massie, Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief, says First Nations are still contemplating whether to mount a legal challenge over Bill S-6. (CBC)

First Nations have said it also undermines the integrity of the final land claims agreements, and warned repeatedly they would launch a lawsuit if it passed.

Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Ruth Massie says while that decision hasn't been made yet, it is still being considered. Massie says Bill S-6 was discussed at length at the the recent CYFN general assembly.

"We are looking at our options," she said. "There is definitely an impact as far as the integrity of our agreements are concerned."

Massie says talks are ongoing with Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and with the Yukon government to reach a "trilateral implementation accord," which Massie says could possibly stave off a lawsuit.

But she says although that door is open right now, an agreement is far from assured.

"What is their offer and is that good enough? They have actually breached our agreements and that's the big question," she said.

"How are they going to fix our relationship now?"

Massie says individual First Nations will now examine the impact of Bill S-6 at their general assemblies. She says the mood is far from conciliatory.

"I tell you, our citizens are not happy. We put in 42 years of work. What was it for? Where is the honour of the Crown?"

Massie notes that a federal election will take place this fall and a territorial election next year. She says First Nations are taking steps to ensure aboriginal citizens are ready to vote and she says they will register their unhappiness at the polls.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yukon-first-nations-still-considering-bill-s-6-lawsuit-1.3133446>

## **UNESCO to send group to Wood Buffalo National Park, says First Nations delegate**

### **Party will look at environment impact of oilsands development**

By Jodie Sinnema, Edmonton Journal July 1, 2015



Bison stand on the shore of Claire Lake in Wood Buffalo National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The park is home to some 4,700 free-roaming bison.

UNESCO has agreed to send a monitoring committee to Wood Buffalo National Park to look at cumulative effects of oil, gas and hydro development on the environment, says a northern Alberta First Nation representative.

During a convention in Bonn, Germany this week, UNESCO — the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — reviewed concerns raised by the Mikisew Cree Nation about the sprawling national park that straddles the Alberta-Northwest Territories border.

The Mikisew Cree had petitioned to have Wood Buffalo — a World Heritage Site since 1983 — deemed “in danger” because of the Site C hydroelectric dam on the Peace River approved by the British Columbia and federal governments, as well as oilsands development and proposed open-pit mining near the northern Alberta park.

“The Mikisew have reported that First Nations have expressed significant concern about (the hydroelectric dam’s) impacts on their hunting, fishing and agricultural areas,” reads a document posted on UNESCO’s website.

The document notes that while a joint Alberta-Canada implementation plan was set up to make sure government worked with stakeholders to make decisions about oilsands development, indigenous groups in the region withdrew from that plan “due to concerns about the engagement process, limited incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge and lack of transparency.”

UNESCO accepted the document Wednesday with no objections, said Melody Lepine, head of the Mikisew delegation in Germany, and expressed its own concerns about the impacts of oilsands development on the Peace-Athabasca delta.

The organization’s World Heritage Committee, whose convention runs June 28 to July 8, asked Canada not to make any decisions about future projects that would be difficult to reverse, and to conduct a strategic environmental assessment to determine the potential cumulative impact of development on the park.

It wants to see results of the assessment by Dec. 1, 2016.

In the meantime, the advisory group to the World Heritage Committee will plan a visit to Wood Buffalo National Park to see what’s happening on the ground, Lepine said.

She hopes that party will come in September or October before winter’s freeze, in time to provide a summary at next July’s conference.

Wood Buffalo National Park covers 4.5 million hectares of boreal forest and grassland. It contains the only breeding habitat in the world for whooping cranes, an endangered species, and its large grass and sedge meadows sustain the world’s largest herd of wood bison, a threatened species.

“We’ve gone through Round 1,” Lepine said of the Mikisew Cree’s push to have Canada and the world better protect the park. “I’m really relieved and very happy with the decision.”

Lepine said she hopes Canada will co-operate with and help the visiting UN delegation when it arrives, but also put more money and resources into monitoring the impact of oilsands and mining on the environment.

The Mikisew Cree also want a wider buffer zone around Wood Buffalo National Park to prevent potential contamination from a proposed mining megaproject upstream of the Peace-Athabasca delta.

“We’ve been getting a lot of support,” said Lepine, who has been visiting with the World Heritage Committee members one-on-one. “Canada will have to be open and coordinating with the experts, the mission. They will be hosts.”

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/UNESCO+send+group+Wood+Buffalo+National+Park+says+First+Nations+delegate/11180318/story.html>

## **Mikisew Cree First Nation applauds UNESCO decision on Wood Buffalo National Park**

By [George Lessard](#)

| July 2, 2015



VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA -- The [Mikisew Cree First Nation](#) is pleased that today, at the [39th session of the World Heritage Committee](#) in Bonn, Germany, UNESCO requested that Canada invite a Reactive Monitoring mission to conduct an in-depth investigation of how [Wood Buffalo National Park](#) is being impacted by hydro-electric and oil and gas development. Wood Buffalo National Park was listed as a World Heritage Site over 30 years ago for its globally unique and important ecosystems.

After acknowledging the threats to Wood Buffalo National Park from hydro-electric dams, oil sands development, and proposed open-pit mining near the Park, UNESCO also requested that Canada not take any decision related to development projects that would be difficult to reverse. UNESCO also requested that Canada undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment to assess the potential cumulative impacts of all

developments on the Park.

UNESCO's decisions comes in response to a petition from Mikisew in December to place Wood Buffalo National Park on the [list of World Heritage in Danger](#).

"We are deeply concerned about the existing impact of industrial activity and climate change on the Wood Buffalo National Park and the new threats posed by megaprojects upstream of the [Peace-Athabasca Delta](#). We thank the World Heritage Committee for taking Mikisew's concerns seriously in today's decision," says Mikisew Chief Steve Courtoreille.

Melody Lepine, head of the Mikisew delegation in Bonn, added, "We have been stunned by the support we have received in Bonn from members of the international community. We look forward to assisting the joint UNESCO/IUCN field mission as it investigates the threats facing Wood Buffalo National Park and the Peace Athabasca Delta in the coming months."

Mikisew is grateful for the wide support its petition has received from other indigenous groups, former Parks Canada officials, eminent scientists and researchers, and numerous non-governmental organizations, including the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

"We applaud the leadership of Mikisew Cree First Nation in bringing the serious threats facing Wood Buffalo to the attention of UNESCO, and urge the Canadian and Alberta governments to act quickly to implement the World Heritage Committee's recommendations," says Alison Woodley, park program director for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society ([CPAWS](#)).

Mikisew encourages anyone interested in learning more about the petition and the threats to Wood Buffalo National Park to watch a short video about the petition available here: <https://vimeo.com/131438792>.

Mikisew Cree First Nation Industry and Government Relations

Melody Lepine

Director

780-792-8736

[melody.lepine@mcfngir.ca](mailto:melody.lepine@mcfngir.ca)

[Mikisew Cree First Nation on Facebook](#)

See also:

"Mikisew Cree First Nation Applauds UNESCO Decision on Wood Buffalo National Park" - @HydroWorld <http://ow.ly/P4fNx>

"UN wants probe of oilsands' impact on Canadian park - UN also wants to review the effect of a proposed open-pit mine and the proposed Site C Dam in B.C." | Toronto Star <http://ow.ly/P4iTT>



"En Danger - Un appel pour sauver le parc national Wood Buffalo

Si les menaces envers Wood Buffalo ne sont pas corrigées, les valeurs universelles exceptionnelles de ce Site du Patrimoine Mondial seront perdues à jamais. Parce que la culture des Mikisew est liée au Delta des Rivières de la Paix et d'Athabasca, la perte des valeurs naturelles de Wood Buffalo pourrait mettre en péril la culture distincte des Cris Mikisew. Pour ces raisons, les Mikisew demandent que Wood Buffalo soit ajouté à la liste du Patrimoine Mondial en Péril."

<https://vimeo.com/131444653>

**Direct Link:** <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/mediamentor/2015/07/mikisew-cree-first-nation-applauds-unesco-decision-on-wood-buffal>

## Land Claims & Treaty Rights

### Coastal grizzly hunt territories eyed for purchase by First Nations, enviros

[Mychaylo Prystupa](#)

Jun 26th, 2015



Councillor Doug Neasloss with the Coastal Guardian Watchmen program near Klemtu on the central B.C. coast.

Two massive guide outfitting bear-hunt territories —one in the north and one in the south —appear to have willing sellers for the first time in years, leading to the tantalizing possibility for conservationists who envision buying the areas up to shut down the majority of the trophy hunt in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Bob Milligan, 45, owns the largest guide outfitter territory on the B.C. coast, and is in talks with the Nisga'a over selling his hunting rights. The colossal 26,000 kilometre northern coast territory near Prince Rupert is only slightly smaller than Vancouver Island, and is teeming with grizzlies and black bears.

“The Nisga’a are involved in a possible purchase,” said Milligan from Terrace, B.C. on Monday.

"There's been a lot of interest in retaining those rights. There are obviously those who think we shouldn't hunt grizzlies, and there are those that do."

If the sale is completed, it would be the one of the largest guide outfitting territories purchases by a First Nation group.

The big question is —what would the Nisga'a do with the guide hunting rights if they got them? Foreign hunters are willing to pay \$25,000 to kill a grizzly, but many Indigenous leaders and Elders find the killing of bears just for a hide or a head abhorrent.

Nisga'a hereditary chief Harry Nyce senior said the issue is "not cut and dry," but his people have not commercially hunted their own territory lands, even though they have the legal ability to kill seven grizzlies per year.

"There have been problem bears in our villages, but those tend to be taken down because of danger. But other than that, there's no planned hunt thus far," he said by phone earlier this week.

The complicating factor, he noted, is the Milligan hunting territory touches upon Gitga'at Nation, which supports a coastal trophy hunting ban.

The province wouldn't comment on the Milligan licence, but said it has received an "application for the transfer of a guide territory certificate that covers areas on the North Coast" and no final decision has been made.

## **Southern grizzly territory could go for sale**

The second largest guide outfitter hunt territory up for grabs is Peter Klaui's on the southern coast — an 18,000 square kilometre area on the B.C. mainland, opposite Vancouver Island.

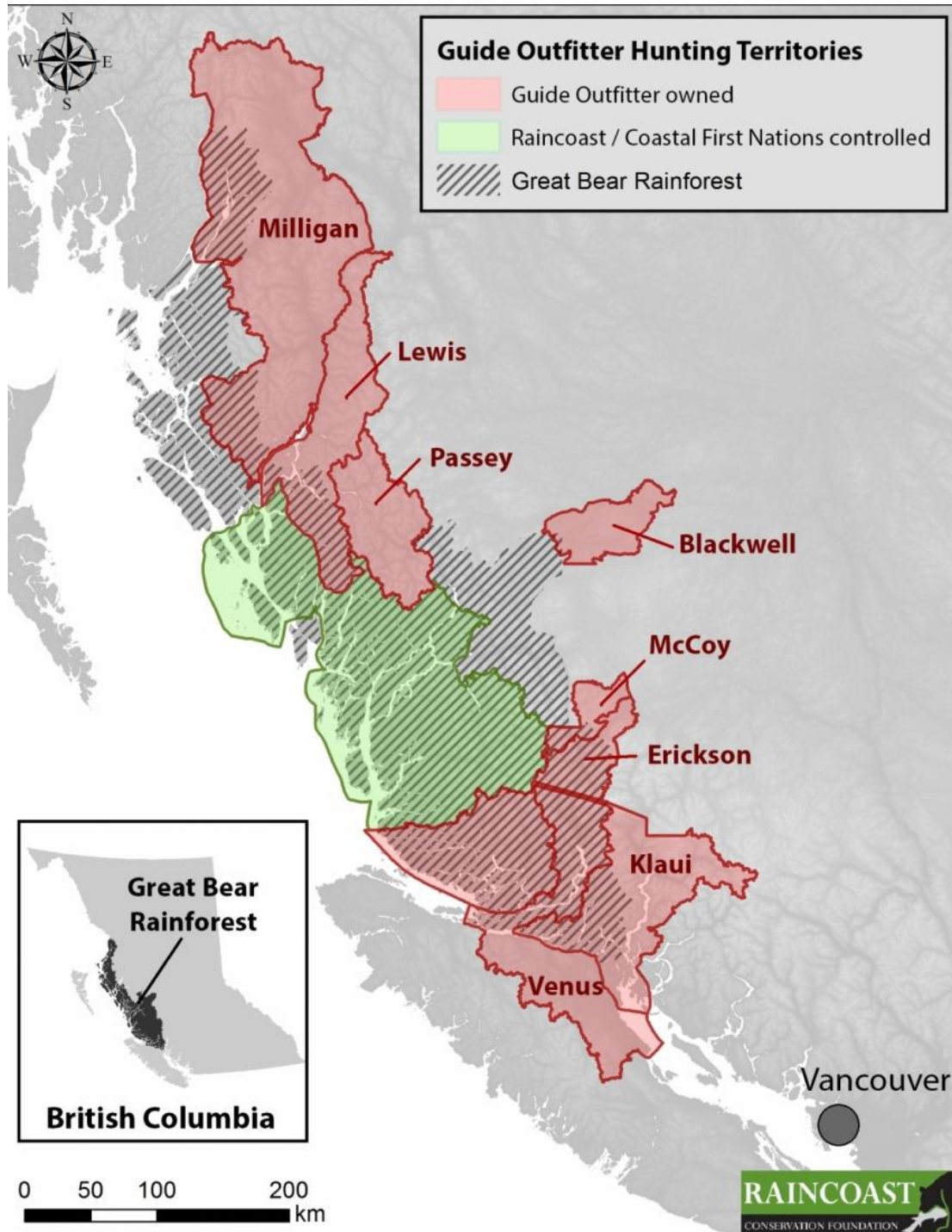
The 65-year-old owner, with North Shore Adventures, says he's close to retirement, and would sell out even to "anti-trophy hunting" groups for the right price.

"So, here's the opportunity for all the bleeding hearts that don't like hunting," said Klaui earlier this week.

"If they want to get rid of hunting on the coast of British Columbia, all they have to do is cut a cheque."

"But, it will be a very expensive proposition for them," he added.

Already, 48 per cent of the Great Bear Rainforest has become effectively off limits to trophy hunting, following the landmark 2005 purchase of a central coast hunting territory by Raincoast Conservation Foundation and Coastal First Nations. The massive area is shown in green in the map below.



***Map of guide outfitting territory certificates in the Great Bear Rainforest.***

***Sources: Raincoast Conservation, provincial government.***

The new owners are required to still "hunt" but they don't actually kill anything. Each year, they invite high-paying nature-loving clients to get in a boat with a guide with a rifle, find bears, and then not shoot them, in order to meet the legal requirements of the licence.



UK tourist not actually shooting, while hunting in a protected guide outfitting territory owned by conservationists in the Great Bear Rainforest. Raincoast Conservation photo.

U.K. retiree Dianne Bradshaw saves every pound sterling she can to journey to Canada to participate in the charade.

"One of my very special experiences is to sit in silence and watch a grizzly, black, or rare spirit bear going about its own business in its own habitat," she wrote from England.

"I know that this is a privilege most people in the world will never experience, and I feel it a great honour to be allowed to be on a bear 'hunt.'"

Coastal First Nations leader Art Sterritt admits it's all a bit of a show to keep the hunt licence.

"So we've had to demonstrate to the province that we're actually hunting, while at the same we're saying, 'we're not very good hunters, because we haven't shot any animals,'" he laughed, earlier this month.

## **Eight trophy hunt territories in the Great Bear Rainforest**

There are now only eight remaining guide outfitting territories that overlap the Great Bear Rainforest (shown in red on the map.) The certificate holders' names are also shown.

If the Milligan and Klauai territories were sold to those seeking to retire the trophy hunts, the protection of the Great Bear Rainforest rises from 49 per cent to 81 per cent.

The Guide Outfitters Association of B.C. said it welcomes First Nations ownership in the industry, and believes guide outfitting and eco-tourism businesses can co-exist. But if conservation-minded groups want to buy up guided territories, then they should.

"If you want to buy a guide area, go buy it," said executive director Scott Ellis recently.

"I don't see any legislation or regulation that will stop them from not hunting bears if that is their decision."

Likewise, the B.C. Wildlife Federation also doesn't oppose the buy outs.

"If there's a willing buyer, and a willing seller, I think that's fair ball," said Al Martin, BCWF's director of strategic initiatives recently.

## **Great Bear Rainforest talks underway**

News of the two owners' willingness to sell their guide territories comes as the province and First Nations enter delicate negotiations to conclude the Great Bear Rainforest agreements, that have been two decades in the making. The talks include efforts to initiate ecosystem management across the coastal region's four million hectares, concurrent with the goal of "human well being."

In these negotiations, Coastal First Nations are urging the province to respect its trophy hunting ban. They say the hunt is harmful to community efforts to build eco-tourism and bear watching businesses.

***Interview with Doug Neasloss with the Coastal Guardian Watchmen program near Klemtu in April. Video by Mychaylo Prystupa.***

So far though, the province has only proposed to protect grizzly habitat, but not the bears themselves. And the demand for a trophy hunting ban has long been rejected by the BC Liberals, which have long supported a trophy hunting economy.

That's why some at Coastal First Nations are seeking assurances that if they at least buy up guide hunting territories in order to retire them, that they'll stay protected.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.vancouverobserver.com/news/coastal-grizzly-hunt-territories-eyed-purchase-first-nations-enviros>



# Katzie working hard to oppose quarry



Katzie Chief Susan Miller (right) has rallied 203 First Nations bands in opposition of the quarry proposed for Sheridan Hill in Pitt Meadows.

by [Neil Corbett - Maple Ridge News](#)

posted Jul 2, 2015 at 1:00 PM

The Katzie First Nation has rallied impressive support for its stance against the proposed new Sheridan Hill quarry.

Katzie Chief Susan Miller has rallied 203 First Nations bands, and spoken with the leadership of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the First Nations Summit and the B.C. Assembly of First Nations.

“What we’ve been doing since April is gaining the political support of all the first nations of B.C.,” Miller explained.

Meadows Quarries of Maple Ridge has proposed a new quarry on the southern portion of Sheridan Hill that would take the top off the Pitt Meadows landmark. The gravel operation would blast and remove 240,000 tonnes of rock per year over five years, reducing the elevation of the hill by 30 metres, from 45 to 75 m.

The Katzie’s position is that Sheridan Hill is part of their people’s traditional creation story, and that their aboriginal rights and title mean government must consult the band before permitting the quarry.

People living near the hill say the quarry would be too close to their homes, and have organized [opposition](#), including a letter-writing campaign and a petition with more than 3,000 names. Pitt Meadows council is also working to stop the quarry.

“It is the intention of this council to make every possible use of every possible tool we have at our disposal to oppose this project,” Mayor John Becker said when the project was first proposed in March.

Miller said when she talks with other First Nations chiefs, their reaction is generally sadness.

“Unfortunately, in Canada the destruction of our sacred sites is not a new thing.”

Last week, Katzie met with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations about the quarry, and pressed the stance that the government has an obligation to consult with the band.

The ministry will require the proponent to conduct an archeological study, and the Katzie will be involved in the selection of the party to conduct it.

Next, Chief Miller and her sister Debbie, the Katzie’s chief negotiator, will be going to the National Assembly of First Nations annual general assembly, to be held in Montreal July 7-9, and will bring the quarry issue before the assembly.

“So we are seeking national support,” said Miller.

The Katzie have also met with Pitt Meadows council and Sheridan Hill residents, and marched in the Pitt Meadows Day Parade.

“I want people to understand we are in this together,” said Miller.

While it may seem the issue has quieted, the Katzie are working hard behind the scenes to stop the quarry application, said Miller.

“There’s not a day goes by that we don’t talk about Sheridan Hill.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.mapleridgenews.com/news/311495831.html>

## **Canada First Nations fight 'broken' system for green lighting oil projects**

by [Audrea Lim](#) @audromatic3000 July 1, 2015 5:00AM ET

**A new process meant to involve First Nations does just the opposite, the aboriginal people say**





Marvin L'Hommecourt stands in front of his trapping cabin. Under pressure from oil companies, he has been forced to move the location of the cabin several times. Brian Harder for Al Jazeera America



This creek on L'Hommecourt's property once ran much higher. Water levels have been reduced since oil companies began using the area for their operations. Brian Harder for Al Jazeera America

*Editor's note: This is the second in a four-part series on Canada's oil boom. The [first article](#) explored the low-paid temporary worker economy that fuels the service sector in Alberta oil towns.*

WOOD BUFFALO, Alberta — Marvin L'Hommecourt gazes over the valley at the headwaters of the Muskeg River. Five years ago, the narrow creek threading along the valley floor reached the top of the bank, 10 feet above. Now, the creek is just a trickle. In recent years, oil companies have been draining it because they need the water for mining operations nearby. Eventually, all the land in sight could be turned into an open-pit mine.

L'Hommecourt, a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations Band, is standing in front of a trapping cabin on grounds he has leased for 20 years and his family has been using for far longer. This land is at the center of the Alberta oil sands, the third-largest oil deposit in the world. In this region, Athabasca, the tarry, semisolid form of oil mixed with sand and silt is mined and then refined into crude oil. That crude has reaped trillions in revenue for oil companies, but also radically transformed the landscape and created

environmental hazards, including air pollution and ponds of toxic byproduct. Although the recent drop in oil prices has led many companies to put new projects on hold, the slowdown isn't apparent in the area around L'Hommecourt's cabin, where mining projects have been underway for more than a decade.

In his day job, L'Hommecourt works as a heavy-machine operator at the Imperial Oil site next door. But it's his ability to trap that is under threat. His trapline, or hunting route, intersects with the leases of five oil companies. When he first began visiting this spot, only a narrow trail led from a dirt road to his cabin. Today, there's a giant parking lot for buses transporting workers to the Imperial Oil mine. In the winter, which is prime trapping season, the buses idle to keep the engines from freezing. That sends up clouds of exhaust that L'Hommecourt says have given him headaches and nausea. And thanks to all the development, he says, the lynx and marten he traps have dwindled in number.

His predicament echoes the frustrations of First Nations members across the region. Most of the oil-sands extraction is taking place in the indigenous people's traditional territories — land in which they have constitutionally guaranteed rights to access for hunting, gathering and performing ceremonies. In recent years, Alberta First Nations have [repeatedly sued](#) oil companies, as well as the provincial and federal governments, over new projects and policies that, the aboriginal people argue, violate their traditional rights to these grounds. The suits have created costly delays for oil companies. In response, the Alberta government recently overhauled its system for reviewing oil projects, a move designed to formalize aboriginal participation and streamline the entire process. However, First Nations oppose the new consultation process, arguing that it leaves too much power in the hands of the government.

“[It's] a lackadaisical, broken consultation structure that doesn't work in partnership with the First Nations to address any issues,” said Eriel Deranger, spokeswoman for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations. Earlier this year, the band sued the Alberta government for failing to consult it over the proposed Grand Rapids pipeline, which will weave through its traditional territory. “They didn't come out to the communities,” said Deranger of government officials. “They didn't engage with the First Nations to determine the impacts of this project, which puts to the question how they are supposed to determine how communities are impacted.”

The Alberta government has acknowledged problems with the new consultation process. A year after it went into effect, then-Alberta premier Jim Prentice [said](#), “We can't have consultation legislation that none of the people who are being consulted support.” Environmentalists are hopeful that the victory of Alberta's left-leaning New Democratic Party in May's provincial election could bring changes, as Rachel Notley, the party leader, has [pledged](#) to [review](#) the province's environmental rules and review processes. In a statement, provincial government spokeswoman Michelle Davio wrote, “The Government of Alberta is committed to a new relationship with the Aboriginal People and to consulting in a manner that promotes and supports their relationship.”



L'Hommecourt must pass through this parking lot to reach his trapping cabin. Brian Harder for Al Jazeera America

The regulatory overhaul began in 2013, when the provincial government created the Alberta Energy Regulator, or AER, to oversee the region's energy development. Established alongside it was the Aboriginal Consultation Office, or ACO, which was tasked with evaluating whether proposed energy developments would hinder the ability of First Nations to practice their traditional rights. According to the new rules, if the ACO decides that aboriginal people would be affected, it could require energy companies to consult with First Nations before submitting a preliminary application to the government. Once the company submits an application, First Nations can still apply to participate in a public hearing on the proposed project, but at this stage, they have a higher burden of proof and a more limited ability to influence the outcome.

In June 2014, the AER held its first hearing, over the Grand Rapids pipeline. The \$3 billion project would allow companies to transport up to 900,000 barrels per day from the oil sands region to Edmonton, the provincial capital. L'Hommecourt's band, the Athabasca Chipewyan, argued that the pipeline's proposed path crossed land used by community members, as well as 56 major waterways, including the Athabasca River, which flows into several indigenous communities. They felt, too, that the pipeline would encourage companies to expand oil-sands development in the region, threatening their way of life. However, the ACO had instructed TransCanada and Brion, the companies behind the proposal, that they didn't need to consult the Athabasca Chipewyan before submitting an application to construct the pipeline.



Lisa King

Lisa King is director of the Athabasca Chipewyan's Industry Relations Corporation, which liaises with oil companies. She says the ACO did not explain its reasoning. (The ACO declined to comment on the case.) But King suspects the organization was relying on an outdated map, from 2000, that excluded the hunting and trapping sites of all but First Nations members who live in the largest community, Fort Chipewyan. King also argues, however, that the details of the map are beside the point: Roughly half the pipeline falls within the band's traditional territory. In fact, she says, requiring First Nations to identify specific sites where they trap and hunt allows oil companies to simply modify the path of a pipeline ever so slightly. That, she says, enables the government to pay lip service to First Nations while essentially rubber-stamping projects.

The band was notified of TransCanada's application in November 2013, after it had been submitted. The Athabasca Chipewyan were given a month to apply to participate in the review process. That left them with little time to gather evidence of the pipeline's "direct and adverse" impact on their communities, the standard of proof set by the AER. The band felt that a technical review of the project and a land-use study were both necessary, but would take months to complete and cost tens of thousands of dollars. Given the 30-day deadline, the Athabasca Chipewyan settled for condensed versions of both. (TransCanada eventually agreed to finance the studies.) At the same time, the band was scrambling to respond to applications for two other TransCanada projects. But the final straw didn't come until the hearing for the Grand Rapids pipeline in June 2014, when TransCanada unexpectedly filed the final draft of an environmental assessment detailing the company's plans for mitigating environmental damage and responding to emergencies. The band had been asking for the draft for months. Although it was hundreds of pages long, the AER panel only gave the Athabasca Chipewyan one day to review it. The band decided to boycott the hearing rather than participate in a process it saw as unjust.

"They have a lot more staff than we do and money and resources," said King. "The whole thing was just stacked against [us]. We thought it was unfair. We made a statement and then we pulled out."



L'Hommecourt shows the location of his cabin in relation to the mining companies holdings. Brian Harder for Al Jazeera America

Others, too, take issue with the review process. Bill McElhanney, a lawyer representing the Bigstone Cree Nation, says the band chose not to participate in the Grand Rapids hearing because its members were afraid they would not be reimbursed for all the



expenses they would have incurred, including legal fees and the hiring of experts. Another client he represented, a potato-seed farmer, ended up spending \$23,000 out of pocket on legal expenses for the hearing on a pipeline that was to intersect his land. The AER typically requires the companies to reimburse parties for expenses they incur, but McElhanney says there has been greater uncertainty since 2013 over whether companies will cover the full amount. (Ryan Bartlett, spokesman for the AER, said the organization “will require the applicant to pay those expenses that are directly and necessarily related to an intervention.”)

For Nigel Bankes, chair of natural-resources law at the University of Calgary, cost is only one inequity built into the review process. The system places an especially heavy burden on First Nations that wish to participate, he said.

“It’s a really discriminatory way of approaching the connection to property,” said Bankes. When a person’s property is trespassed on, “we assume an adverse and direct effect. But we don’t assume it in the context of First Nations using their traditional territory. We’re way more demanding in terms of evidence of a conflict, even just to give standing. Remember, this is just a question of do we have to listen to you?”

The AER approved the Grand Rapids pipeline in October 2014. Three months later, the Athabasca Chipewyan filed a lawsuit against the ACO, alleging that its consultation process is unaccountable and unfair and denies First Nations their constitutional right to be consulted over actions that could affect their traditional livelihoods. The case could go to trial next spring.



L'Hommecourt expects that he may have to move again. Brian Harder for Al Jazeera America



Traps hang inside L'Hommecourt's cabin. Brian Harder for Al Jazeera America

Despite the exhaust fumes and inconveniences, L'Hommecourt still drives the seven hours to his trapline from his home in Cold Lake several times a month. (He works 10 days on, 10 days off at Imperial Oil.) Occasionally, his three children visit the shack with him. But they are adults now with children of their own, and they all work in a casino in Calgary, almost 10 hours away. L'Hommecourt could be the last generation of his immediate family to spend more than mere vacations out on the land. "Before, you trapped to make money," said L'Hommecourt. "Now you need money to trap."

He believes he will eventually be forced to leave his trapline altogether. Six years ago, he had just completed the walls of a log cabin he was building about 100 feet away from his current shack when Imperial Oil asked him to relocate. The new cabin blocked access to a bridge that trucks needed to reach the nearby mine, the company said. L'Hommecourt refused, but trucks carrying gravel began arriving at daybreak, and eventually, the noise and disturbance made him acquiesce. He took the 8,500-Canadian-dollar compensation the company offered, allowed its workers to dismantle his cabin, and built the shack instead.

Anticipating the day he will have to leave, L'Hommecourt has started building a log cabin on the land where he was born in Poplar Point, the Chipewyan reserve a couple of hours farther north. Accessible in summertime only by boating up the Athabasca River, Poplar Point remains largely undeveloped, with only around 10 residents at any time of the year. There, he will be able to trap in relative peace.

"I'm kind of cheering [oil prices] to go up so I can have job security," he said. "But on the other hand, I'm looking at the oil prices and it's going down. I'm thinking, 'It's going to be less guys out there trying to get in there and dig it up, less exploration and everything.' They'll leave me alone in terms of my trapline."

**Direct Link:** <http://america.aljazeera.com/multimedia/2015/7/canada-first-nations-say-system-for-approving-oil-projects-is-broken.html>

# Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

## Unsolved murders of indigenous women reflect Canada's history of silence

As spotlight returns to decades-long violence against native women and girls, calls for national inquiry have been rebuffed but groups refuse to give up



Murder victim Tina Fontaine's cousins, Kattie Lee, Jolene, Angel, Rose Fontaine sit in front of artwork honoring the 15-year-old whose dead body was found in Canada's Red river. Photograph: Mali Ilse Paquin for the Guardian

Mali Ilse Paquin in Winnipeg

Thursday 25 June 2015 16.07 BST Last modified on Monday 29 June 2015 17.27 BST

Hanging on the walls of Kattie Lee Fontaine's living room are two striking portraits of her cousin Tina, who was just 15 when she disappeared from the streets of Winnipeg, Manitoba, in August 2014.

Tina and her four cousins, Kattie Lee, Rose, Jolene and Angel grew up together on the Sagkeeng First Nation, an indigenous reserve east of Lake Winnipeg with a population of 3,000 – and six unsolved cases of missing or murdered First Nations women.

In June 2014, Tina travelled to Winnipeg to rekindle her relationship with her estranged biological mother. Her family reported her missing, and five weeks later, on 8 August, Fontaine was picked up by police in a vehicle that had been pulled over for drunk driving.



Despite the missing persons report, the officers let Tina go, and later the same day she was found passed out in a downtown alleyway. Paramedics took her to hospital, where she was handed over to a social worker to be taken into foster care, but she ran away.

Nine days later, Tina's body, wrapped in a plastic bag, was dragged from the Red river. "We couldn't even open the casket because of what her murderers did to her," said her great aunt, Thelma Favel. Nearly a year after her death, Tina's family are beginning to lose hope that her killers will ever be caught.

Meanwhile her cousins fear that they could suffer the same fate as Tina: the four girls live in the North End, an area of Winnipeg rife with violence and sexual harassment. "We feel even less safe since her death. We miss her so much", says Kattie Lee.

Tina is just one victim in an decades-long epidemic of violence that has claimed the lives of thousands of indigenous women. Ever since the 1970s – when aboriginals were encouraged to migrate to the cities – women of all ages have been shipped back to their families in coffins, said Derek Nepinak, the Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC). "I lost an aunt in Winnipeg in 1978," he said. "This is not a new phenomenon by any means."

But Canadians are finally starting to pay attention.

In its first attempt to gauge the scale of the problem, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) last year retrieved data from 300 police authorities across the country. The study concluded between 1980 and 2012, at least 1,017 First Nations women were murdered, while a further 108 went missing in suspicious circumstances.

Last week, [the RCMP released an updated report](#), which concluded First Nations women are four times more likely to go missing or be murdered than other Canadian women. While aboriginal women represent just 4.3% of Canada's female population, they represent 16% of female murder victims and 11% of missing persons cases involving women, the report said.

The update also said in the 12 months since the first report, 11 more indigenous women had gone missing.

## **'It isn't really high on our radar'**

When the findings were first published, thousands gathered for candlelight vigils in cities across [Canada](#), and chiefs and activists renewed their calls for a national inquiry into the country's indigenous femicide.

But those calls have repeatedly been rebuffed by the Conservative prime minister, Stephen Harper, who has argued the problem is mainly one of domestic violence and criminality on indigenous reserves.

Asked about the possibility of a national inquiry by the CBC state television in December, Harper replied: ["It isn't really high on our radar, to be honest."](#)

First Nations leaders acknowledge that violence is a problem on the reserves – which are beset with poverty, drug abuse and unemployment. But only 40% of the country's indigenous people actually live on reserves, and activists and analysts say the abuse and murder visited on Canada's indigenous women reflects a broader history of marginalization and abuse.

That view is shared by the United Nations, which has repeatedly called for a national inquiry into violence against First Nations women, similar to the investigation launched into the [murder of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juárez in Mexico](#).

The victimisation of native women is partly the legacy of colonial heritage

The UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Cedaw) [concluded last year](#) that the Harper government's refusal to investigate the violence was "a grave violation" of indigenous women's rights.

"The victimisation of native women is partly the legacy of colonial heritage where gender-based violence is linked to the lack of realization of their economic, social, political and cultural rights," said the authors of the report, Niklas Bruun and Barbara Bailey in an email.

Nahanni Fontaine, a special adviser to the Manitoban government on aboriginal women's issues, argues that the violence is a form of collateral damage wrought by centuries of prejudice. "From the first moments of contact with European explorers, indigenous women were scorned and stereotyped as promiscuous because they owned their sexuality and were treated as equals by their male counterparts," she said.



# Canada confronts its dark history of abuse in residential schools

Such contempt for indigenous women was reinforced by brutal attempts to force First Nations to assimilate into mainstream Canadian society. Earlier this month the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission described such policies as a form of "[cultural genocide](#)" in a report on the state-sponsored, church-run Indian Residential School system.

Between 1876 and 1996, 150,000 aboriginal children were taken from their families and interned in boarding schools specially designed in the words of the system's founder Sir John A MacDonald, to "take the Indian out of the child".

One of those children was Sue Caribou, who in 1972 was separated from her family at the age of seven, and taken to a Catholic school where for the next five years she was physically and sexually abused by missionaries who forbade her from speaking Cree, her native language.

The violence has never stopped: by the time Caribou left the school in 1979, both her parents had been murdered. Now aged 50 years old, Caribou has lost three female relatives to murder. The last was her beloved niece Tanya Nepinak, who disappeared in 2011 on her way to get pizza in Winnipeg. She was 31 years old.

"When is this going to end? It's getting worse," Caribou said.

Tanya's body was never found, but police believe she was killed by a man called Shawn Lamb, who in 2012 admitted murdering two other indigenous women, Carolyn Sinclair, 25, and Lorna Blacksmith, 18.



First Nations bands form a blockade at the main rail line between Toronto and Ottawa near Marysville, Ontario, last year as part of a day of action to call attention to missing and murdered indigenous and aboriginal women. Photograph: Fred Thornhill/Reuters/Corbis

Indigenous groups argue that institutional racism contributes to a culture of impunity for perpetrators of crimes against aboriginal women.

## Justice for the missing or murdered

Canada's worst serial killer also targeted First Nations women: pig farmer Robert Pickton tortured and killed at least 33 aboriginals before he was arrested in British Columbia in 2002.

Soon after his arrest, Amnesty International concluded that perpetrators of violent crimes tend to target them because the "police in Canada have often failed to provide Indigenous women with an adequate standard of protection".

Police's failings proved fatal for Jennifer McPherson, 41, an Ojibway woman who went missing in British Columbia in May 2013. Her remains were found one week later scattered around the island where she was an off-season caretaker of a fishing resort. McPherson's husband Traigo Andretti, later admitted to choking the 41-year-old and burning her body.

Andretti confessed to murder, but investigators soon discovered evidence linking him to the disappearance of another indigenous woman seven years earlier.

Myrna Letandre had been dating Andretti when she went missing from her home in Winnipeg in October 2006. Her sister, Lorna Letandre, begged Winnipeg detectives to search Andretti's house, but he was released after being interrogated just once and was never charged. He married McPherson a couple of months later. Last year, Letandre's remains were found buried in the house – seven years after her sister first raised the alarm.

"If the Winnipeg police had properly investigated Myrna Letandre's case, my sister would still be alive today," said Kim McPherson, Jennifer's sister, her voice still cracking with grief.

Last year, Winnipeg police announced that it was making investigations of missing and murdered aboriginal women a "strategic priority"; it has also established a special task force of 18 officers to solve 28 outstanding cases of murdered or missing women in the province. The force has also worked on improving relations with the community in the city's poorest neighbourhoods – all of which are predominantly indigenous.

But better policing alone is not the answer, warned Winnipeg's police chief, Devon Clunis. The Jamaica-born commissioner said that Canada still needed to embark on a difficult national conversation on discrimination against First Nations.

"It's not just simply a police issue. It's not an indigenous community issue. It is an issue for every single person who calls himself a Winnipegger, a Manitoban, a Canadian," he said.

Such a reckoning seems all the more urgent in Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, which was named as "[Canada's most racist city](#)" by the national news magazine MacLean's.

The city is home to the country's largest urban indigenous population, but that population is relegated to relatively impoverished neighbourhoods, which are plagued by underemployment, drug abuse, substandard housing and violent crime.

## **A dysfunctional foster care system**

Activists say that the city's social services – which should be protecting vulnerable indigenous children – are instead exposing them to further risk by plunging them into a dysfunctional foster care system.

Indigenous children make up 87% of the children in foster care in Manitoba, even though they only account for 34% of the province's population under 18. This means that at any given time, nearly 10,000 native children are under the care of the provincial Child and Family Services department (CFS).

"We see a direct correlation between girls who are taken into foster care at a young age and women who go missing," says Grand Chief Nepinak of the AMC. "We have to stop traumatising our children."

Carolyn Sinclair was separated from their alcoholic mother when she was only two. She and her sister Amanda were placed in a foster home where Carolyn was sexually abused, and by the time they were teenagers, both girls were using hard drugs.

Amanda, now 35, managed to turn her life around and now has a steady job as a construction worker. Carolyn Sinclair never found a way out of her chaotic lifestyle: she was murdered and dumped near a garbage bin in Winnipeg at the age of 25.

In turn, Carolyn's two small children have now been taken into foster care, and Amanda has been refused rights to see them. "We don't even know if they are still alive," she said.

For more than a decade, a chronic shortage of foster placements meant that children taken into care were often simply left in hotels in downtown Winnipeg. Tina Fontaine disappeared after running away from a Best Western hotel where she had been given a temporary placement.

In April, a 15-year-old girl in emergency care was violently assaulted and left for dead in the same hotel. Four weeks later, the minister responsible for the CFS, Kerri Irvin-Ross, was promoted to become deputy prime minister of Manitoba.

Indigenous activists such as Sue Caribou see a grim parallel between the casual neglect of the current foster care and the systematic abuse of the residential schools.

"Kids are shuffled around in abusive homes. It's starting all over again," she said.

Tina Fontaine's great aunt Thelma Favel said she hoped that coverage of her niece's murder would help focus attention on the violence – and perhaps even save a few lives.

Speaking through her tears, she said: “My priest has told me that like Jesus died for our sins, Tina died so that other girls could be saved.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/25/indigenous-women-murders-violence-canada>

## **A national inquiry can't solve the problem of missing, murdered aboriginal women**

Jeffrey Simpson

The Globe and Mail

Published Thursday, Jun. 25, 2015 3:00AM EDT

Last updated Thursday, Jun. 25, 2015 5:19AM EDT

Alberta Premier Rachel Notley wants a public inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women. So do all the other provincial premiers. So do the opposition parties in Ottawa. So, naturally, do all the national aboriginal organizations.

They are wrong.

The problem of murdered and missing aboriginal women is unquestionably serious. A public inquiry, however, would be the least effective remedy.

Public inquiries, as has often been shown, work best when they investigate an incident such as the fatal E.coli outbreak in Walkerton, Ont., in 2000; the 1971 prison riot in Kingston; the Vancouver street riots during the 2011 Stanley Cup playoffs; the death of Polish citizen Robert Dziekanski at the Vancouver airport in 2007.

These were specific events, not what the murdered and missing aboriginal women challenge is all about. These tragedies stretch back a long way. They have been tracked by the RCMP since 1980, and in particular after 1991, when Statistics Canada began collecting data on homicides in census metropolitan areas.

Examining hundreds of cases – stretching over three and a half decades, about 80 per cent of which have been solved by the RCMP – would be way beyond the capacity of a public inquiry. It would soon founder on the sheer weight of what those who are demanding one want, which is not to review criminal investigations, but to explore the underlying causes of the violence.

Those causes are economic, sociological, political, attitudinal, institutional – in other words, vast in scope and complicated in analysis, way beyond the scope of a public inquiry.

What any investigation of the problem would uncover, in part, is known to every first-year student of sociology or criminology: that women, aboriginal or non-aboriginal, are killed or assaulted disproportionately by those with whom they live or are in relationships. We hardly need a public inquiry to uncover this well-established fact.

The RCMP, which has been doing excellent work in providing detailed overviews of the problem in 2014 and again recently, reported that “violence within family relationships is a key factor in homicides of women.” Elsewhere, the recent RCMP report said, “most homicide victims had a previous relationship with the offender ... the offender was known to the victim in 100 per cent of the solved homicides of aboriginal women in RCMP jurisdictions, and in 93 per cent of cases of solved homicides of non-aboriginal women.”

Some months ago, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt blurted out a truth for which he was roundly condemned: that more than 70 per cent of the cases involved assaults by aboriginal men against aboriginal women. The RCMP report again proves the minister was right, although he might have underestimated the share. Plain speaking in public, however, runs the risk in such matters of being politically incorrect.

Aboriginal groups, including the Native Women’s Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations, keep demanding a public inquiry. What they should be doing, especially the AFN, is demanding a meeting of aboriginal chiefs and other aboriginal leaders to discuss what is going on in their communities that has led to the murdered and the missing. What can they, as aboriginal leaders, do about this? After all, the violence is disproportionately happening in their communities, under their watch, among their people.

Instead, the usual propensity, seen in the AFN’s reaction to the recent RCMP report, is to blame governments and to “demand action” from them. “The numbers of missing and murdered indigenous women cannot remain a mere statistic,” said AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde. “It’s time for action that shows the lives of indigenous women and girls matter.”

Chief Bellegarde is right about “action,” but one searches in vain in the rest of the AFN’s response for what the organization and its members propose to do about the problem, beyond holding another “national roundtable.”

To suggest that “action” by national aboriginal leaders take place beyond calling for governments to take “action” is not to minimize the fact that the murders and disappearances of aboriginal women are awful tragedies and that, numerically, they are overrepresented among female homicides and disappearances in the general population.



The roots of the problem run very deep. Some extend well beyond aboriginal populations, for there is violence against women across Canadian society. There are obvious policies and steps that governments could take to respond better to the problem of murdered and missing aboriginal women. A public inquiry isn't one of them.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/a-national-inquiry-cant-solve-the-problem-of-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women/article25099163/>

## **Special Topic: Residential Schools & '60s Scoop**

### **How Alberta intends to follow up on its apology to First Nations**

CARRIE TAIT

CALGARY — The Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Jun. 26, 2015 8:20PM EDT

Last updated Friday, Jun. 26, 2015 8:28PM EDT

Alberta Premier Rachel Notley this week apologized for the province's inaction against the residential school system that removed thousands of First Nations children from their homes and placed them in abusive settings. She also called for a public inquiry into the disappearances and murders of aboriginal women across the country. This came three weeks after Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission described the country's past First Nations policies as "cultural genocide." Kathleen Ganley is Alberta's Minister of Aboriginal Relations (as well as the Minister of Justice and Solicitor-General). Ms. Ganley spoke with The Globe and Mail's Carrie Tait about Alberta's apology and policy plans.

#### **Why did Alberta issue the apology?**

Given that we're trying to move forward with a renewed and more positive relationship with all indigenous people in the province, I think it is important to start by recognizing what happened in the past. And what happened in the past is that children were torn from their homes and taken away from their culture and their community and that has had some serious long-term, detrimental effects on an entire population.

**An apology is a start, but in part it is symbolic. What are you going to do that is tangible?**

We're certainly looking into further consultation around inclusion of the history of indigenous culture in Alberta's school curriculum – things that our students aren't really learning. They don't have a good understanding of what a deep impact [residential schools] have had on an entire culture. It is important that everyone understands that. We're going to need to work in consultation to deal with a number of issues, including the missing and murdered indigenous [women]. So, obviously, we've called on the federal government to perform an inquiry into that.

I think the next step is that relationship-building. So, having said, "We did something wrong in the past and the effects have been really horrendous, we sincerely apologize for that," we now need to move forward creating a more positive relationship. We've met with the Grand Chiefs for Treaty 6, 7 and 8, the Métis Settlements General Council, the Métis Nation of Alberta Association, the First Nations Women's Economic Security Council, amongst other groups. So what we're trying to do is build a trustful relationship so that we can move forward on solving some other problems by working together.

### **Will Alberta move alone if the federal government does not launch an inquiry?**

I don't think the province is necessarily in a position to move alone on that. There are certainly some things we can do to address the issue, but it is our position that the federal government should hold this inquiry. And I think this is a systemic sociological phenomenon that needs to be studied on the large scale. You can't say that it is different here than it is in Saskatchewan or Manitoba.

This is an overall thing that needs to be addressed together, because residential schools were not just a problem in Alberta. And the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women is not just a problem in Alberta.

### **What are you doing to address these problems now, other than call for an inquiry?**

I think in the coming weeks and months, we're going to be starting by working with our partners to come to solutions collaboratively. Because this isn't an issue where the government should decide on a policy direction and drop that solution from up high. That's not the appropriate way to move forward. So I think that the first step that we need to do is start working with groups to understand what some of the drivers are and what some of the best solutions are to address that.

The most important thing to go into those meetings with is an open mind. If we go in saying: "Oh, these are the projects we want to do, what do you think," we don't think that's the right way to approach it. We think the better way is for everyone to sit down around the table and say: "This is an issue, who has some ideas?" And then move forward in that manner.

### **Would the government have apologized if not for the Truth and Reconciliation report?**

I suspect that we would have offered that apology in any event, because regardless of whether someone has initiated a formal report to tell us what the impact of that was, there's enough [evidence] out there to know that ripping children from their homes and destroying these communities has had a profound impact, and I think that's something we should apologize for in any event.

*This interview has been edited and condensed.*

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/alberta/how-alberta-intends-to-follow-up-on-its-apology-to-first-nations/article25160763/>

## Care needed for '60s Scoop kids

By Murray Mandryk, The StarPhoenix June 26, 2015

Brad Wall, this province's 14th premier, was born Nov. 24, 1965. This will make Wall 50 years old by the next Grey Cup, which seems to be how we mark the passage of time in Saskatchewan.

Cam Broten - the seventh NDP/CCF leader in the party's 82-year history and only the second who has never been a Saskatchewan premier - was born April 29, 1978.

Politically speaking, they couldn't be more different. But as Saskatchewan men of the same era, they are similar to most of us.

To be raised in Saskatchewan is to know who you are and where you come from. It is virtually a birthright in a place where we understand how important this is to our makeup.

But imagine if you were an adopted child of different skin colour than your white mom and dad and brothers and sisters. And imagine if it was believed there was no need to recognize that difference in ethnicity, cultural or religious background into which you were born.

Imagine being raised white, knowing full well you were not. Imagine never knowing who you really were and where you came from. Imagine having no way of finding out.

Had Brad Wall, Cam Broten or any one of the rest of us been born into a struggling First Nations or Metis family between the 1950s and mid-1980s, it's very possible we would have been part of the '60s Scoop - a loosely defined term describing a program that saw some 20,000 Canadian aboriginal children adopted into white middle-class families.

In the waning years of the failed residential school experience, "well-intentioned" white society thought Metis and First Nations babies would be better off removed from the abject poverty, family breakdown and drug and alcohol struggles on reserves and in inner-cities and raised by white families.

Like many such "good intentions," no thought was given to either the immediate impact on the child or the long-term impact of them not knowing who they were. And we all know what paves the road to hell.

For this, Wall, Broten, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and every politician across the country - all of whom had no role in the making of these policies - owe all such children, their birth parents, brothers and sisters, extended families and the First Nations and Metis communities a heartfelt apology.

Congratulations to Wall for promising on Wednesday to do just that and to Broten for being relatively supportive in this critical first step of healing.

But we actually owe these children more than that.

We don't owe them money - especially if it's money rendered from a lawsuit that stands to solve little.

As Wall rightly stated, there is no way to quantify damages, given that there may not have been damages in many cases. Unlike the failed residential school experiment, where sexual and physical abuse was all too common, many of these children were raised in loving homes.

What then? Do we extend the class action suit to loving, adoptive parents who provided the best home they could? Instead, we need to look ahead, which begins with acknowledging the great strides we have made in the past 30 years.

Saskatchewan Social Services now tries to identify families and individuals at risk. There are intensive in-home supports, interventions to help families in crisis, positive parenting programs and other initiatives focused on strengthening the family home and keeping aboriginal children out of institutional care whenever possible.

Through First Nations and Métis agencies and communities, all foster parents since 2010 have received an Aboriginal Cultural Component Curriculum, facilitated by an aboriginal trainer and an elder. Foster parents must have a mandatory cultural curriculum as part of their yearly family development plan. All child welfare workers now require mandatory cultural curriculum training. And foster children must "be given the opportunity to value, preserve and participate in the life of their cultural community."

While much more needs to be done, the list of what Saskatchewan and other governments have done - including supporting First Nations and Metis family services bureaus - goes on and on. And this doesn't include the millions spent on education that will be the key component to a better life for First Nations and Metis children of the future.

But we still specifically owe help to the children of the '60s Scoop.

That doesn't mean direct payment, but it likely means far easier, quicker access to birth records and cultural education they missed and - most critically - counselling to potentially sort out a lifetime of displacement.

It's the least we can do. It's what we must do.

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Care+needed+Scoop+kids/11168471/story.html>

## **Siksika chief knows first hand about abuse at residential schools**

[Daryl Slade, Calgary Herald](#)

Published on: June 26, 2015 | Last Updated: June 26, 2015 5:32 PM MDT



Minister of Aboriginal Relations Kathleen Ganley, left, and Chief Vincent Yellow Old Woman of Siksika Nation during an announcement at McDougall Centre on Friday. The Siksika chief made comments following the announcement on the NDP government's recent apology on residential schools. Leah Hennel / Calgary Herald

Vincent Yellow Old Woman was proudly wearing his ceremonial headdress when he sat in the gallery at the legislature in Edmonton last week to hear Rachel Notley's NDP government apologize to Alberta's aboriginal people for decades of physical, sexual and cultural abuse at residential schools.

"I want to thank the Alberta government for the announcement they made in the legislature. I was very moved and touched by the words the premier made," the chief of the Siksika Nation, an hour east of Calgary, said at a [news conference](#) on Friday.

"I spent nine years in a residential school. I know what it was like to be in a residential school. I endured all the abuse you can think of and I was a survivor. I thank the Creator for the strength and well-being of my mind to face the challenges that were there and help me move ahead. If it wasn't for the Creator and support of the elders and prayers, a lot of

members would not have survived. They have moved forward in spite of what took place.”

The government apologized last week for its past silence on the damage done by residential schools and added its voice to calls for a federal inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

Notley delivered the historic [apology](#) in the legislature as Yellow Old Woman and dozens of residential school survivors looked on from the public gallery.

“As our first step, we want the First Nation, Métis and Inuit people of Alberta to know that we deeply regret the profound harm and damage that occurred to generations of children forced to attend residential schools,” Notley said.

“Although the province of Alberta did not establish this system, members of this chamber did not take a stand against it. For this silence, we apologize.”

Notley said her government has taken the lessons of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s executive summary, [released](#) earlier this month. The commission issued 94 recommendations to atone for the “cultural genocide” committed against indigenous peoples in the residential school system.

As well, Notley noted the “devastating link” between the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women and issues of poverty and domestic violence, adding her voice to national calls for an inquiry.

“Too many indigenous women are missing. Too many indigenous families have suffered. Too many communities don’t have the answers they need,” the premier said.

Alberta is the latest in a series of provinces to add its voice to the call for a national inquiry, joining the Assembly of First Nations, the United Nations and several city councils across the country.

Yellow Old Woman could not say how many women are missing from his nation alone, but added: “One is too many.”

“In our hearts as leaders we miss them,” he said. “In our hearts every day we think of them. We hear their cries. We will never forget these women.

“I want to thank the province for taking leadership to help — all chiefs in Alberta support this investigation of missing aboriginal women. In our own family, we have lost members. We don’t know where they are. We wake up every day wondering, ‘Where are they?’”

Yellow Old Woman said it is not only women missing, there are also men who have disappeared and “they are mourned, too.”

**Direct Link:** <http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/siksika-chief-knows-first-hand-about-abuse-at-residential-schools>

## **Gormley: Finding a way to move on from injustice**

By John Gormley, The Leader-Post June 26, 2015



John Gormley.

The so-called '60s Scoop of aboriginal children is the latest historical wrong waiting to be righted, as history lays bare a program - whatever its ambitions - that so clearly failed. And, while an apology from government is necessary and important, public patience is waning for yet another interminable round of recriminations over events that happened decades ago.

Between the 1950s and early 1980s, an estimated 20,000 aboriginal children across Canada were placed for adoption in non-native homes under the federal government's Adopt Indian/Metis Program.

Signed on by provinces, which carried out child welfare and adoption placement, the program was in effect in Saskatchewan from 1966 to 1975 under Liberal and NDP governments.

The term "scoop" was coined by a researcher who heard from a B.C. social worker and some aboriginal families that babies and toddlers were literally scooped from reserves under the flimsiest of pretexts by staff with no cultural training who then placed the children with nonaboriginal families.

Like so many failed indigenous programs before and since, the adoptions strategy had three distinguishing features: a top-down "government knows best" unilateral approach that ignored aboriginal concerns; in some measure, a darker subtext of trying to eradicate or dilute culture and ethnicity; and, in other quarters, a genuine and wellintentioned desire to help indigenous people.



Many of us growing up in Saskatchewan knew families - often kind, loving and well-motivated couples desperately wanting kids - who opened their lives and hearts to aboriginal children they adopted and raised as their own.

Not all adopted aboriginal children suffered and had negative experiences. Some flourished. But others lost their culture, language and identity.

And, while some children suffered abuse, many felt lost between two cultures - neither prepared to accept them.

While transracial adoptions have worked in certain cultures, with the benefit of hindsight it now seems ludicrous to think they ever could have worked here.

The dislocation of culture and identity, not to mention often-prevalent racism, plus a serious disparity between reserve life and nonaboriginal life would only result in gaps being widened between cultures rather than narrowed, as was hoped.

While history cannot be changed or wrongs undone, it is possible to acknowledge flawed policies and negative results, accept responsibility and then apologize unequivocally.

As part of a proper apology, the experience of victims must be empathetically understood and validated, insight and remorse displayed, a commitment made not to repeat the harmful acts and steps should be offered to help those directly harmed where help might be possible. After that, true closure comes only after victims accept the apology, forgive and then choose to move forward.

If acceptance of an apology has conditions attached to it, as has played out since the 2008 apology of the prime minister for residential schools, more than \$5 billion tax dollars spent and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, one gets the distinct impression that closure might not come because some people are simply not prepared to allow it.

Premier Brad Wall, in the adoptions case, has sensibly agreed to apologize to aboriginal children and families on behalf of the province, only after consulting with aboriginal leaders and organisations. Carefully watching the premier and the unfolding events is a huge segment of the Saskatchewan population which genuinely wishes only the best for aboriginal people, but is growing weary of the continual cycle of recriminations, blame and inertia.

This majority falls into two categories: generations of people not even born when past events occurred and, in the case of a huge immigrant population, new Canadians who have no ties to earlier Saskatchewan life or to the culture of "white, European colonizers", as non-aboriginals are sometimes labelled by indigenous activists.

An apology can be made and accepted with a shared decision to better the lives of aboriginal people and ensure that governments are held accountable as they move forward. But it may not end there. Just as with residential schools, there will be financial

claims and demands for compensation through lawsuits, reparations payments, healing funds and the like.

There will also be demands for more government spending, new programs, a public inquiry and an array of options designed to ensure that all eyes stay focused on the past.

How the legacy of the '60s Scoop is navigated by the province and by aboriginal leaders will say a lot about the road ahead in Saskatchewan.

Gormley is a talk-show host, lawyer, author and former Progressive Conservative MP. He can be heard Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on NewsTalk 980 CJME.

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.leaderpost.com/life/Gormley+Finding+move+from+injustice/11168204/story.html>

## **Saskatchewan premier says 60s Scoop apology coming, but no compensation**

SASKATOON — The Canadian Press

Published Wednesday, Jun. 24, 2015 3:48PM EDT

Last updated Thursday, Jun. 25, 2015 8:25AM EDT

Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall says the province will formally apologize for decades-old policies that saw aboriginal adoptees taken from their homes and placed with non-native families.

But Wall says Saskatchewan will not offer cash to the victims of the so-called '60s Scoop because the province feels it is not a "compensatory issue."

"I am telling you, the government is not entering into this with the idea of compensating with cash — some sort of a cash payment — for those in this issue," Wall said Wednesday during a break in a cabinet meeting in Saskatoon.

"That's not the direction we're intending. We want to move forward and deal with the ongoing issues that exist. We want to make sure there is a broader knowledge about the Scoop, which there isn't, frankly."

Wall said his government will work with aboriginal groups in the coming months to ensure the apology can be given earnestly, but he did not say when it will be delivered.

“We are going to have our respective ministers — the minister of social services, the minister of First Nations and Metis relations and myself — meet with First Nations and Metis leaders, aboriginal leaders in the province to make sure we get it right.”

An estimated 20,000 aboriginal children across Canada were taken by child-welfare agents starting in the 1960s and placed with non-aboriginal families.

It has been acknowledged the practice stripped those children of their language, culture and traditions. It is said to have had a similar impact to that of residential schools. Some victims have described it as being treated like pets.

Class-action lawsuits are in the process of being launched in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

“I phoned my mother today and we were both crying,” said Robert Doucette, the president of Metis Nation-Saskatchewan, who was taken from his family as a baby and placed in a foster home.

He said the apology is important and his mother wants to be at the legislature when it happens.

It wasn’t only children who suffered, Doucette said. So did their parents and grandparents.

Last week, Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger apologized on behalf of his government and didn’t rule out providing compensation.

“I feel that the families need support,” he said at the time. “If they think there is a role for compensation and we think that’s going to be an important part of it, we will consider that in the future.”

Wall noted that attempts to remove culture from children in the past wasn’t limited to just aboriginals. He said his father was encouraged not to speak the Mennonite language of Plautdietsch, with disciplinary measures in school if he did.

“That’s not an immoral equivalency of the Scoop, but I am saying: What the Scoop was about was removing aboriginal culture and language from kids, from a people,” he said.

“That’s just wrong.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/saskatchewan-premier-says-60s-scoop-apology-is-on-the-way-but-no-compensation/article25096172/>

# Terry Glavin: Arguments around the TRC report have gone off the rhetorical rails

[Terry Glavin](#) | June 25, 2015 | Last Updated: Jun 25 9:05 AM ET



The debate around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report has grown fraught.

It all started with Chelsea Vowel, a Métis teacher from the Cree community of Lac Ste. Anne, Alta., who now lives in Montreal. On June 8, Vowel wrote a lively essay for her website, [âpihtawikosisân](#), making the case that journalists who want to bang on about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's inquiries into Canada's Indian residential school legacy should at least make the attempt to read the commission's June 2 interim report. Indeed, Vowel advised her readers, why not cut out the middleman altogether and read it yourself?

Then, Erica Violet Lee, a Plains Cree student from the University of Saskatchewan, got the idea: why not get a whole bunch of people to read sections of the report on video and upload it all to YouTube? Zoe Todd, a Metis feminist and academic from Edmonton, got the ball rolling right away. Within a few days it was all there, a Youtube playlist featuring 71 people, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, reading separate sections of the entire 388-page summary report.

This may be the most useful single contribution so far to the cause of keeping the conversation going. Last weekend's National Aboriginal Day events were both enlivened and overshadowed by the immediacy of the residential school legacy, owing to all the fanfare, punditry and handwringing that attended the release of the commission's report, which was itself the culmination of six years worth of research, hearings and testimony from more than 6,000 witnesses. But if a YouTube project is the most useful contribution so far, that's not saying much.

It is not as though Canadians are recoiling from the commission's findings, exactly, but the whole subject is quickly becoming fraught with rhetorical leg-hold traps and

improvised explosive devices of the most crudely polemical kind, not least because the country is in the midst of an undeclared election campaign. You'd never know it but the official race to the polls on Oct. 19 hasn't formally started yet. It may even be shaping up to be a fairly tight three-way race and aboriginal people are already being deployed as battering rams by each of the parties as they lay siege to each other's parapets.

If a YouTube project is the most useful contribution so far, that's not saying much.

So there's that, but there has also been a sort of spiralling escalation of hostilities underway, fought mainly on the point of whether the legacy of the residential schools can be shoehorned into the category of "cultural genocide." (I think it can, and I've said so.) Harsh words have been exchanged. It's been a bit bruising. This is no longer the kind of discussion you will sensibly enter with your guard down.

Ordinarily, I wouldn't want to spoil a perfectly good donnybrook, but there's a lot at stake here and a couple of things stand out as quite probably the main reasons why things have gone off the rails.

The first involves just how we situate the culpability and responsibility for the injustice and the suffering associated with the residential school project.



Resident Elder Florence Paynter at the Migizii Agamik on the University of Manitoba Fort Garry Campus watches live-streaming video of the U of M president and vice-chancellor Dr. David Barnard make an emotional apology on the subject of the Indian Residential School system at a Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing .

Writing in the Globe and Mail the week the commission's report was released, philosopher John Ralston Saul, who has spent a great deal of time thinking about these things, argued that "the situation of indigenous peoples" is "the single most important issue before us, whether we are recently arrived in Canada or have been here for centuries." Hard to disagree with that.

But there was something odd about just who "we" are in Saul's argument. The word "we" appeared 34 times in his 1,320-word opinion essay. I managed to configure myself into Saul's "we" only a handful of times. For each instance to apply, one would need to be the comfortable beneficiary of some grandpappy whose stock portfolios were felicitously serviced by his chums over gin down at the Empire Club back in the 1890s. I can't count myself in that number, much as I might like to.

Something similar was going on in Postmedia columnist Stephen Maher's splendid response to Conrad Black, the former owner of the National Post who has more or less led the charge against the proposition that the residential schools amounted to cultural genocide. Black calls the whole idea "deliberately provocative and sensational." Against Black's case, Maher marshalled the example of the extinct Beothuks of Newfoundland.

But are "we" as Canadians implicated in that tragedy? The Beothuks had vanished more than a century before Newfoundland entered Confederation in 1949 and a genocide claim against the British Crown is further complicated by a 1769 Royal Proclamation instructing settlers in Newfoundland to "live in amity and brotherly kindness" with the local natives. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that whatever case might be made out against early Newfoundlanders would also pertain to the Beothuks' rivals among the Mi'kmaq and Inuit.

We all have some very serious work to do in healing these wounds, right now, and building a better country, for all of us.

Black may have made a cartoonish hash of it in depicting pre-contact aboriginal life as a Hobbesian dystopia of Stone Age warfare, wantonness and cruelty. But we should all be capable of admitting that, from time to time, in what is now Canada, the indigenous tribes did behave like packs of howling Europeans. And to be fair, Black is on solid ground when he notices that what's happening here may be approaching the point of "national moral self-flagellation."

But that still doesn't make it untrue to say that Canada's policies towards aboriginal peoples take in a range of measures that at times could be likened to cultural genocide. Calling the genocide claim a "blood libel," as Black did, might be going a bit too far. But writing in the Ottawa Citizen last week, the veteran Jewish community leader Bernie Farber (who I should say I consider a friend) came close to situating Black's arguments in the same general category as Holocaust denial.



Commission chairman Justice Murray Sinclair, centre, and fellow commissioners Marie Wilson, right, and Wilton Littlechild discuss the commission's report on Canada's residential school system at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Ottawa on Tuesday, June 2, 2015.

It is also unnecessary for the combatants in this argument to reach all the way back to John A. Macdonald for evidence to support or oppose the cultural genocide claim. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's 1969 White Paper on Indian affairs was more ambitious in articulating a final solution (see how a bad choice of words can irreparably lower the tone?) than anything Macdonald said.

The Trudeau Liberals intended to eliminate Indian status in Canada entirely, along with the Indian Affairs department, treaties and even Indian reserves. It took Canada's aboriginal communities two years of unprecedented national mobilization to get Trudeau to back down.

This is not just a giant distraction from the issues at hand, either. The "cultural genocide" claim is the central thesis of the commission's Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future report. Its entire 388-page heft is devoted to proving that thesis and recommending a way forward from it. This is a good reason to read the report with a very critical eye.

But it should be read. Chelsea Vowel and Erica Violet Lee are quite right about that. And they have done a lot of people a great service by uploading the whole project to YouTube. And no matter which side you end up on in the whole cultural genocide debate, or who you think should be held historically responsible, we all have some very serious work to do in healing these wounds, right now, and building a better country, for all of us.

**Direct Link:** <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/terry-glavin-arguments-around-the-trc-report-have-gone-off-the-rhetorical-rails>

## **Inuit, Nunavummiut claimants still lag in IAP applications**

### **Independent Assessment Process to wind down by early 2016**

SARAH ROGERS, July 02, 2015 - 8:30 am

As the Independent Assessment Process winds down, a federal secretariat is on the lookout for former residential school students with unresolved claims, including more than 200 Inuit applicants.

The IAP provides compensation to former students for serious abuse they suffered at residential schools, as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement — the largest class-action settlement in Canada's history.

Since it was established in 2007, the IAP has paid out \$2.8 billion to more than 32,000 former students.



And across Inuit Nunangat, there have been 934 IAP claims resolved as of June 2015.

But those numbers suggest that fewer Inuit former residential school students who suffered physical and sexual abuse as children may have benefited from the federal compensation program than have other former residential school students.

That's [a concern that was raised](#), at least in Nunavut, a few years into the residential school settlement process.

Of completed claims, Inuit make up just .02 per cent of all IAP claims among former students, although Inuit make up 4.2 per cent of all Indigenous Canadians.

But it's hard to say for sure, because it's unclear how many eligible Inuit residential school survivors there were in the first place.

When the residential school settlement was launched, it was estimated that at least 3,000 Nunavummiut had attended residential schools.

Present day Nunavut was home to 13 residential schools, while four operated in Nunavik and three in the Northwest Territories.

In Nunavut alone, 395 former students have completed the IAP as of June 2015, while another 119 applications are considered "in progress."

The federal agency that administers the program hopes to complete all claimants' hearings by the spring of 2016, said Dan Shapiro, with the Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat, in May.

But there are still claimants who the secretariat hasn't heard from for extended periods of time.

"We need to reach these individuals in order to resolve their claims," Shapiro said.

The IAP is a claimant-centred process, in which former students must show harm occurred at a listed school or hostel they attended.

It operates separately from the Common Experience Payment, another compensation program that was available to anyone who attended residential school.

The secretariat that oversees IAP does not have statistics on how much has been paid out in IAP compensation to Inuit nor to Nunavummiut, although the average pay-out across Canada has been about \$86,000 per successful claimant.

Claimants who have unresolved IAP claims and who have not heard anything about the progress of their claim over the last several months are urged to contact their lawyer, or

call the IAP information line at 1-877-635-2648 to ensure that their claims continue to move forward.

Adjudication Secretariat Statistics			
FROM SEPTEMBER 19, 2007 TO MAY 31, 2015			
Date	Received	Resolved	In Progress
British Columbia	6660	6053	607
Alberta	8211	6982	1229
Saskatchewan	8803	7014	1789
Manitoba	5499	4751	748
Ontario	3366	2714	652
Québec	2185	1915	270
Yukon Territory	552	514	38
Northwest Territories	1543	1336	207
Nunavut	514	395	119
Atlantic	307	252	55
Outside of Canada	328	270	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>37968</b>	<b>32196</b>	<b>5772</b>
RESOLVED IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS			<b>1881</b>
TOTAL HEARINGS HELD			<b>24842</b>
TOTAL COMPENSATION PAID			<b>\$2.810 Billion</b>

This chart shows the status of IAP files, by province or territory. Across the Inuit Nunangat, there have been 934 IAP claims resolved as of June 2015. (COURTESY IRSAS)

#### Direct Link:

[http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit\\_nunavummiut\\_claimants\\_still\\_lag\\_in\\_iap\\_applications/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit_nunavummiut_claimants_still_lag_in_iap_applications/)

## Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

### Tribal Leaders Are Looking For Ways To End A Crisis Of Youth Suicides

by [Kira Lerner](#) Posted on June 25, 2015 at 8:00 am



Since December, 14 members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe between the ages of 12 and 24 have committed suicide. During the same time period, 176 youth living on the tribe's sprawling Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota attempted suicide and 229 more had suicidal ideations and were treated by the Indian Health Service.

Tribal council member C.J. Clifford shared the devastating statistics with members of the U.S. Senate's Committee on Indian Affairs on Wednesday [during a hearing](#) focused on ways to end the recent crisis of Native youth suicides and their effects on Native American communities.

"These are our children and we cannot bear to lose anymore," he said in his testimony. "When we lose one child, it hurts the spirit and soul of every one of our people."

In February, the president of the tribe declared a state of emergency, the second time the tribe has taken such an extreme measure since 2010. It was around that time four months ago that Pastor John Two Bulls, who works with youth on the reservation, was tipped off about a planned group suicide. He frantically drove to the location, and when he got to the wooded area, he saw ropes hanging from tree branches.

"I was thankful that we were able to get there without finding anybody hanging from those ropes," pastor John Two Bulls [told the New York Times](#).

Clifford told that story and others on Wednesday before members of the Senate. "We are struggling," he said. "We need the resources to get out in front of the problem."

Last week, the U.S. Department of Education [announced](#) that it is giving Pine Ridge School \$218,000 in emergency funds to help its students deal with the mental health issues associated with the recent losses. The money will be [put toward efforts](#) like hiring counselors and social workers and will be used to help the students through holistic healing.

While the funding is necessary to deal with the immediate effects of the recent string of suicides, tribal leaders said they need more sustained support. During the hearing, Clifford and the chairman of Minnesota's Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, Darrell Seki Sr., discussed the underlying problems on their reservations that are causing their youth to end their own lives.

Substance abuse and poverty are far more prevalent on Native American tribes than other U.S. communities. Clifford said the rate of unemployment on his tribe is above 70 percent, 60 percent of students do not graduate from high school and the life expectancy is only 50 years. Native American children also face [disproportionally high rates](#) of abuse and neglect and most of them do not receive any treatment for those issues. A report released last year concluded that their lives are being "destroyed by relentless violence and trauma."

Clifford told Congress that his tribe needs more funding for youth opportunity, mental health programs and federal housing grants to deal with overcrowding in tribal homes. “We need long-term solutions, not a quick band aid today,” he said.

Seki also said that his tribe needs more sustained funding to hire counselors and other mental health professionals. Ten years ago, the tribe received an emergency funding grant after a [school shooting](#) on the reservation left ten people dead. The counselors put in the schools made “a huge difference,” he said.

“Congress needs to find way to remove obstacles imposed on tribes through the process of short-term grants,” Seki said. “Only sustained funding of long-term programs will end suicides on Indian Country. Red Lake has a plan to do so, but it will need sustained funding.”

A mental health professional echoed the tribal leaders’ comments, as did members of Congress.

“It our job to fight for what we know works,” said Sen. Al Franken (D-MN), a member of the Committee on Indian Affairs. “I apologize on behalf, well I can only apologize for myself that we have not been doing enough for your kids and for you.”

**Direct Link:** <http://thinkprogress.org/health/2015/06/25/3673724/native-american-youth-suicide/>

## **Native Americans Look At Confederate Flag Controversy And Ask: What About 'Redskins' And Other Racist Symbols?**

By [Ismat Sarah Mangla](#) [@ismat](#) [i.mangla@ibtimes.com](mailto:i.mangla@ibtimes.com) on June 25 2015 1:54 PM EDT



Native American activists and supporters are hoping the controversy over the Confederate flag spurs a larger debate against derogatory symbols. Scott Halleran/ALLSPORT



Native Americans protest before the Minnesota Vikings and Washington Redskins game on Nov. 7, 2013, at the Hubert Humphrey Metrodome in Minneapolis. Controversy over the Confederate flag has renewed Native American activists' calls to remove hateful symbols against them. Adam Bettcher/Getty Images

The Confederate flag's days seem numbered as retailers and statehouses alike remove (or consider removing) it for public consumption in the wake of the Charleston shooting. But it's not the only symbol in American culture surrounded by controversy.

Native American activists who have lobbied against the use of derogatory terms such as "redskins" are monitoring the flag controversy in hopes that it will raise a larger national conversation about harmful symbols that are commonly used in popular culture.

"Our country is having a national debate over symbols, and we should take an honest look at those symbols that don't promote inclusivity but rather promote bigotry," said Joel Barkin, vice president of the Oneida Indian Nation and spokesperson for [Change the Mascot](#), a national campaign for ending the use of the word "redskins" as the mascot and name of the NFL team in the nation's capital.

Just as defenders of the Confederate flag have argued that it represents pride in Southern culture and history rather than racism, supporters of team names like the "Redskins" [have insisted](#) that they actually honor Native Americans. But activists say parallels between the two controversies are worth noting. Even if the intention behind the usage of such symbols isn't to harm, Americans should recognize that minority groups are harmed by them nonetheless -- and eliminate them as a result.

"Proud tradition does not negate the racism of a flag associated with the enslavement of a people, nor does it negate the racism of a moniker that dehumanizes and slurs a people who underwent attempted eradication," wrote Tara Houska, tribal rights attorney in Washington, in the [Indian Country Today Media Network](#). "Despite empirical studies demonstrating psychological harm, numerous tribal resolutions, lawsuits, and protests spanning decades, the r-word still remains widely accepted."

Houska said that the mocking of Native American culture through sports symbols has devastating effects. “Every day, I walk down the streets of our nation’s capital, through the halls of Congress, past statues of celebrated American leaders. And every day, I am subjected to pinpricks of racism directed at Native Americans,” she said, describing the frequent encounters with symbols from Washington’s NFL football team, which still carries the name “Redskins.”

Some in the Native American community have taken note of the swift national change of heart over the Confederate battle flag and are wondering why that level of popular rage was never leveled at symbols that signify racism toward Native Americans.

Rev. Graylan Hagler heads the historically black congregation at the Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ in Washington, where he has helped [lead the charge](#) to change the football team's name for more than 20 years. Hagler says that people need to remember the history that’s imbued with symbols like the Confederate flag and the Washington team name in order to really understand the harm they invoke. The original owner of the Washington Redskins team, George Preston Marshall, was an avowed racist and segregationist, said Hagler.

“When black folks said the Confederate flag represents murder and genocide, how dare we rationalize it into some other meaning? And when Native Americans say these names are harmful, who are we to turn around and rationalize it away?” said Hagler. “Slurs against Native Americans are just as racist as the Confederate flag and lead to the continued dehumanization of human beings, just like the flag does.”

Most activists are hopeful that progress against derogatory terms directed toward Native Americans is moving in the right direction. Barkin says that the movement has come a long way, as many schools and states around the country have taken already taken action against racially charged team names. And the law is on their side too, adds Barkin.

Last week, the Supreme Court ruled that the state of Texas did not violate the First Amendment in banning specialty license plates bearing images of the Confederate flag. [Lawyers for Native Americans](#) taking on the Redskins team are using that decision to bolster their case that the term “Redskins” violates federal trademark law that prevents trademark registrations whose names “may disparage” or bring people into “contempt or dispute.”

“We’re having a watershed moment right now for this discussion on hateful symbols,” said Hagler. “We need to have it in the broadest fashion and talk about removing these kinds of images and symbols completely from our culture. If we’re truly going to be a society built upon equality and honoring democracy, we have to listen to the victims of history.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.ibtimes.com/native-americans-look-confederate-flag-controversy-ask-what-about-redskins-other-1984094>



# Mexico's Indigenous Tribes Used to Get Wasted on These Prehispanic Brews

By [Duncan Tucker](#)

June 25, 2015 / 3:15 pm

“Before the Spanish arrived here, the tribes used to prepare these drinks as a kind of potion to get drunk,” Nino Leon tells me as he serves up two glasses of *tepache* and *tejuino* from the metallic vats wedged in the backseat of his weathered Ford Taurus.

“Nobody knows the precise origin of these drinks but they’ve always been most common in Jalisco and the surrounding areas of western Mexico,” he says.



A plump 66-year-old from Guadalajara, the Jalisco state capital, Leon is a father of two and grandfather of six. For 48 years he has supported his family by selling tepache and tejuino out of the back of his car.

“I was 18 years old when my grandfather taught me how to make tepache and tejuino,” he says. “I still prepare them just the way he showed me. There are other brewers who have newer methods, but this is the traditional way.”





Made from fermented maize and pineapple respectively, tejuino and tepache are unique and refreshing beverages. Typically served in plastic cups or plastic bags tied to a straw, they are sold almost exclusively on market stalls or by pedal-cart street vendors.

Tejuino is a thick, stodgy brew that ranges from cloudy beige to murky brown. The fermented corn taste combined with salty and sour seasonings is like nothing I've ever tried before.

Tepache is a much lighter drink that varies in color from bright yellow to earthy red. It has a sweet but slightly tart flavor, with a hint of hard cider to it.



Both are distant, lesser-known cousins of *pulque*, a fermented agave brew that also predates the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in 1519, and is currently enjoying a [hipster revival](#) in the cantinas of Mexico City.

Leon typically makes 50 liters of each beverage per month. To make tepache, he peels the rinds of 20 pineapples and then blends the pulp and mixes it with two kilos of piloncillo, a local form of unrefined brown sugar. He then leaves the rind, pulp, and sugar to ferment in a 200-liter oak barrel for approximately two months.



To make tejuino, Leon harvests a kilo of maize—including the roots—only selecting stalks that have grown to about 18 to 20 centimeters. He washes the maize, disinfects it,

and then blends it into a honey-like mixture before adding piloncillo. He boils it until thick and then leaves it to ferment for about a month, again inside an oak barrel.

Both mixtures are fermented at room temperature, although seasonal variations mean the process is slightly quicker during the hot summer months and takes a little longer during the winter.

“When you leave them to ferment a long time they take on a strong alcoholic content. Just one small glass can knock you out!” Leon says with a grin. But before they are ready for consumption, both drinks are watered down until they achieve the desired consistency.

The final product is usually no more than one percent alcohol by volume, Leon explains: “It’s very light and refreshing. A half-liter glass will make you feel relaxed but it won’t get you drunk.” Clients looking for a stronger fix sometimes spike their tejuino with tequila, he says, while others prefer to mix tepache with small quantities of beer or mezcal, tequila’s smokier cousin.



Traditionally, tepaches served straight with ice, whereas a half-liter portion of tejuino should be mixed with the juice of a large lime and half a teaspoon of salt before being poured over a handful of ice cubes. Before serving, Leon decants the mixture in and out of a metal pan two or three times so that the salt dissolves. Finally, if the client wishes, he adds a dusting of *Tajín*, a locally made seasoning comprised of chili, salt and dehydrated lime.

Most vendors serve tejuino with a dollop of lime-infused *raspado* (shaved ice), but Leon argues against this practice because the raspado tends to dissolve too quickly, thus watering down the drink and diluting its flavor.

Despite his traditionalist methods, Leon is not adverse to innovation. He also sells *tejuipache*, a half-and-half mixture that fuses both drinks’ distinct flavors without being as heavy on the stomach as a regular tejuino.

Many of the construction workers who buy Leon's *tejuino* actually appreciate its stodginess because it helps stave off hunger for a couple of hours. The salt also helps to rehydrate the body and replenish fluids lost while working under the scorching sun, he says.

As if these beverages were not sufficiently impressive, Leon notes that, as a result of the natural fermentation process, both *tejuino* and *tepache* also aid the intestinal flora and serve as a good source of probiotics.

Every day from 11 AM to 7 PM, Leon can be found opposite the Punto San Isidro shopping center on Avenida Rio Blanco, in the northern outskirts of the Guadalajara metropolitan area. Perched beside his car on a tiny plastic stool, he shelters from the sun beneath the rudimentary tarpaulin roof that he has erected over the vehicle.



Having lost full use of his left leg in a car accident 28 years ago, Leon has stuck to making a living doing what he knows best. He sells *tepache* and *tejuino* at 15 pesos (\$1) for a half-liter or 25 pesos (\$1.60) for a liter.

“Some days I make 200 or 300 pesos (\$13 to \$20), other days I don’t even make 100 pesos (\$6.50),” he says.

It is not a particularly stable profession, he admits, but someone has to serve as the custodian of these strange but enchanting brews.

**Direct Link:** <http://munchies.vice.com/articles/mexicos-indigenous-tribes-used-to-get-wasted-on-these-prehispanic-brews>

## New book looks at historic treaty with Native Americans

[James Goodman](#), Staff writer 7:08 p.m. EDT June 25, 2015



The importance of the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua is evident in the celebration that now occurs every Nov. 11 — the day this treaty was signed.

Leaders of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy [lead a march in celebration of this treaty](#), which asserts Native American rights, now and then.

A new book, *Peacemakers: The Iroquois, the United States, and the Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794*, by State University College at [Geneseo history professor Michael Leroy Oberg](#) delves into the history of a treaty signed more than two centuries ago.

This treaty didn't stop exploitation of Native Americans, but unlike other treaties, it sets forth principles of sovereignty in an important phrase.

"The key part is 'the free use and enjoyment' of their land," said Oberg, who has written five other books and edited a sixth on Native American history.

Article 1 of the treaty sets the conciliatory tone of the treaty by saying: "Peace and friendship are hereby firmly established, and shall be perpetual, between the United States and the Six Nations."

Oberg, 50, who lives in Brighton, wrote the book, which runs about 200 pages and will be published in about a month as part of Oxford University Press' Critical Historical Encounters series.

Leaders of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy — made up of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk and Tuscarora nations — signed the treaty at Canandaigua with Col. Timothy Pickering, who was President George Washington's special agent.



Oberg's research included studying extensive correspondence and minutes related to the treaty.

Washington wanted to reach a peace agreement with the Six Nations because he was worried that they would join Native Americans in nearby territories rebelling against encroachments on their land.

"Pickering recognized the importance of the Six Nations — particularly the Senecas — to the security of the states. He had to give the Six Nations what they wanted because he needed the allegiance of the Iroquois," said Oberg.

The Six Nations, Oberg noted, also faced serious challenges — particularly white settlers coming onto their lands.

"The treaty for them offered a unique opportunity to get their grievances heard," Oberg said.

Under the treaty, a strip of land along the Niagara River was returned to the Senecas, but the treaty has not over the years helped Native Americans regain lost land. Nor has it stopped Native Americans from losing additional territory.



Sarah Taddeo and event attendees explain why the Canandaigua Treaty is significant to modern history and American relations.

A half century ago, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers building the Kinzua Dam in Warren, Pennsylvania, and the creation of the Allegheny Reservoir, members of the Seneca Nation were forced to relocate.

"We lost 10,000 acres. We evoked the 1794 treaty, but it didn't work," said G. Peter Jemison, manager of Ganondagan State Historic Site in Victor.

Jemison, who co-edited a collection of essays about the 1794 treaty, said that such losses do not diminish the importance of the treaty.

Oberg, who was recently given the title of "distinguished professor," by State University of New York officials, tells how attempts to limit Native American sovereignty have continued.

The U.S. Supreme Court, he writes in the conclusion of his new book, has frustrated the ability of the Oneida Nation to recover lands that the state acquired in transactions that failed to get the required federal approval.

"But the treaty remains a powerful symbol, and part of the 'supreme law of the land,' that recognizes and affirms the rights of the people of the Longhouse to their lands and their way of life," Oberg writes.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2015/06/25/treaty-canandaigua-native-americans-oberg-suny-geneseo-new-book/29298821/>

## **Louisiana's Native American tribes share traditions with visitors at Vermilionville in series of monthly programs**

### **Vermilionville slates series of monthly programs featuring Native Americans**

HOLLY DUCHMANN | SPECIAL TO THE ADVOCATE  
June 28, 2015

The grounds of the [Vermilionville Living History & Folk Life Park](#) undergo a transformation on the last Saturday of every month to the steady beat of Native American drums.

The hypnotic rhythms welcome visitors to a clearing at the back of the museum's land where members of Louisiana's Native American tribes dressed in traditional regalia hum and sing tribal songs.

They sit under the shade of a structure covered with a roof of palmetto leaves as they make jewelry, purses and other crafts, working with their children to pass on traditions that were established hundreds of years ago during a much simpler time.

The monthly series is a part of the museum's new Native American residency program, in which Louisiana tribes are invited to stay and engage with the park's visitors for a day each month.

The tribes set up at what is known as the Native American Common Ground — a field that serves as a ceremonial site for the tribe. A palmetto leaf-covered structure that

provides a shaded meeting place for gatherings is of a design not specific to any particular tribe.

The program was opened to about a dozen Louisiana tribes that have had contact with Vermilionville. Currently, five tribes have scheduled dates to be there, according to Jolie Johnson, the museum's operator coordinator.

The first residency took place in April, she said. In September, in honor of Native American Culture Day, the common ground will be shared by all the tribes.

"This site is not for Vermilionville, it's for (the tribes,)" Johnson said. "Our main goals are to show the tribes that we want to have a space for them to come and interact with the public on a more consistent basis, not just one day a year."

She said the museum is trying to get word out to the community that the last Saturday of every month is an opportunity to engage with Native American tribes at Vermilionville.

The ceremonial structure erected on the site opens to the east for the rising sun and is made of mostly hackberry, maple and persimmon and covered by a palmetto roof. Modern hardware was used in building the structure so it could withstand storms but was disguised with traditional rawhide.

The structure was completed last September and is the first structure to be finished for the Common Ground.

"We wanted to create a ceremonial ground, a common area, not a structure that was specific to one tribe but something they could all call their own," Johnson said.

Plans are in the works to build a second structure by next year to mirror the original and to create an open crescent area.

The museum's 10-year plan calls for a domestic living area at the site, as well as a native planting area where crops such as corn and tobacco will be grown.

Structures for the Native American Common Ground project are being built by tribe members using wood from trees in Louisiana.

The project was initially funded through a grant given by the Lafayette Convention & Visitors Commission but is now funded completely through Vermilionville.

The [Canneci N'de Band of Lipan Apache Native American](#) tribe will be the resident Native American tribe this Saturday, and will be doing crafts and dancing to their native songs.

"One thing I really enjoy about this tribe is that they're very involved with the youth community, that they work with their younger family members and they pass on the



traditions,” Johnson said. “They’re continually passing on the traditions, which is important.”

The tribe will be mostly doing crafts and dancing to their native songs. One tribesman, Edgar Gray Wolf Bush, will be making a purse out of a turtle shell while other members will be making jewelry.

The Lipan Apaches were first captured and enslaved by the Spanish in the 1700-1800s and were sold throughout Louisiana. Today the tribe, whose name translates to “pole pine standing in a row,” is local to Southwest Louisiana with many members living in Lafayette and Lake Charles, and they work toward reviving, preserving and retaining their culture, as well as their language, in Louisiana.

Other tribes scheduled to participate in the program this year are the United Houma Nation and the Avogel Tribe of Louisiana.

Last month, the tribe Pointe-au-Chien, from lower Southeast Louisiana near the Houma and Terrebonne marsh area, came to Vermilionville and made jewelry.

“You see them every day in your day-to-day life,” Johnson said. “They’re in the grocery stores, they’re in your schools but they look like everyday people. But when they’re here, they tend to come in their regalia so it becomes a little bit more visual, and it makes a visual connection with people.”

**Direct Link:** <http://theadvocate.com/news/12692878-123/louisianas-native-american-tribes-share>

## **Washington Redskins Lawyer: White People Think “Redskins” Is Worse Than Native Americans Do**

Bob Raskopf argued in federal court that the team’s name was not offensive to Native Americans.

posted on Jun. 25, 2015, at 3:36 p.m.

[Lindsey Adler](#)

BuzzFeed News Reporter



“White people seem to think the word ‘Redskins’ is worse than Native Americans do,” Bob Raskopf told BuzzFeed News on Thursday, fresh off oral arguments in federal court.

Raskopf represents the [Washington Redskins](#) — known legally as Pro-Football Inc — in the lawsuit that threatens to strip the team of its [trademark](#) registration on the basis that it is disparaging to Native Americans. The team can still use the name if it permanently loses its trademark registration, but without it, anyone can produce merchandise using the name and mascot — which would severely impact the team’s bottom line because it exclusively profits from any sales of the image.

In June 2014, the United States Patent and Trademark Office ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, several Native Americans led by activist Amanda Blackhorse. The office found the name was disparaging.

The Redskins immediately appealed, and on Tuesday morning, both sides argued in front of a judge in Virginia’s Eastern District federal court.

The burden is on the Redskins to prove that the term was absolutely not disparaging to Native Americans at the time when the trademark was issued in 1967, said Jesse Witten, the plaintiffs’ lawyer.

Raskopf argued that he has examples of the name used by Native-American teams in the 1970s.

“Here’s what the news says: ‘Apache Redskins beat the Bears,’ and the photo is of two little kids wearing Redskins uniforms and being all happy,” Raskopf told BuzzFeed News. “Where were the activists then? Where are the parents and team organizers saying, ‘I don’t want my kid playing under a Redskins banner’?”

“Of course news media — the *Washington Post* — don’t like [the name],” said Raskopf. “There’s plenty of sports columnists who have something to say, but it’s just political correctness, not reality.”

Raskopf declined to discuss his understanding of the word in modern context, adding that it's "not the point" in this case.

"Look at the definition of the word from that time. More than 90% say 'North American Indian,' and some say 'can be disparaging,' but it depends on how you use it," he claimed. "We're not using it to hurt anybody, and everybody knows it, and that's why the Native Americans are happy with it."

The trademark registration was stripped once before, in 1992, but was overturned at the district court level because the plaintiffs were slow to file on appeal.

Before Tuesday's hearing, the judge emailed both sides and asked them to consider *Walker v. Texas Division, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Inc.*, in which the Sons of Confederate Veterans argued that Texas had violated their First Amendment rights by denying them the right to use the Confederate flag on state-issued license plates. On June 18, the United States Supreme Court voted against the Sons of Confederate Veterans, placing heavy emphasis on "government speech."

For Blackhorse and her co-plaintiffs, that decision strengthened their case against the Redskins legal team.

But Raskopf said that the crux of his argument Tuesday was that just because a trademark registration is government-issued, it is a stretch to believe all registered trademarks are "government speech."

"A can of Coke is not government speech, and Coke still has federal trademark protection," he said. "You wouldn't look at a can of Coke and think, *This represents the U.S. government.*"

Judge Gerald Bruce Lee, who heard Tuesday's arguments and set a tentative trial date for July 27, has yet to determine if a trial will actually happen.

To contest Raskopf's point that the term Redskins has only recently become considered offensive, Witten referenced a 1972 meeting between Leon Cook, then the president of the National Congress of American Indians — "the largest and oldest civil rights organization for Indians" — and Edward Bennett Williams, who was a part owner of the NFL team at the time.

During the meeting, Cook "demanded the team change their name, the racist fight song lyrics, and the cheerleader uniforms," Witten said. Williams changed the fight song and the cheerleader uniforms, but the name stayed, and has yet to go. In a declaration filed on behalf of the Blackhorse trademark case, Cook said, "Although Mr. Williams did not at first appear to be receptive to our message, by the end of the meeting, we believe he understood our sincere view that the team name was deeply offensive."

Much of Raskopf's argument leans on a 2004 study by the Annenberg Public Policy Center that found that 90% of self-identified Native Americans did not find the name offensive.

The survey has been thoroughly discredited, though, said Witten. He deferred to a [blog post](#) by students at the American University Washington College of Law that calls into question the methodology and demographics of the survey.

"It was one question without context in the middle of a survey issued during the 2004 presidential election," Witten said.

The law students said allowing respondents to self-identify as Native Americans was one particular flaw with the survey. They added that people who identify as "1/16th Cherokee," for example, often do not have any close ties to their heritage.

Raskopf touted the center's credibility in conducting polls and said that "very few" people would have "lied" about such ancestry. And even if they did, he said, they would have comprised only a small portion of respondents.

Neither party expects a decision in trial court to be the final word — appeals are already being discussed. And team owner Dan Snyder has said repeatedly that he has zero intent to change the team name voluntarily.

Witten, though, said, "We feel really, really good about our case."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.buzzfeed.com/lindseyadler/washington-redskins-lawyer-white-people-think-redskins-is-wo#.bo8PVzrgg>

## Sioux Chef Revives Native American Recipes

By [Lindsey Moon](#) & [Charity Nebbe](#) • Jun 26, 2015



Chef Sean Sherman preparing for a food demonstration

[Chef Sean Sherman who is Oglala Lakota](#) was raised on a reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. After he started working in a commercial kitchen, he became interested in incorporating some of the ingredients of his heritage into his food.

"I had this vision of doing a cookbook just focusing on Lakota foods," he says. "But when I started researching, I wasn't finding the information I was looking for. I had to devise my own education plan and found the basics of Native American food."

"There was no 'Joy of Native American Cooking' that I could turn to," he laughs.

During this *Talk of Iowa* interview, Sherman talks with host Charity Nebbe about working with ingredients used by different tribes in various parts of the country and how he learned about how those tribes were preserving foods and cooking them.

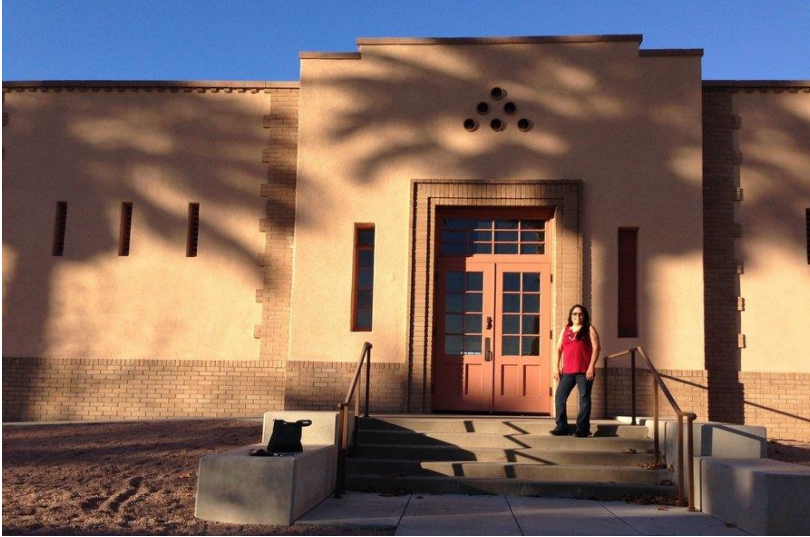
"I started with foraging books and got an idea of plant identification," Sherman explains. "I want to show how varied Native American dishes are."

Kelly Schott, who owns Historical Pathways and teaches classes on traditional cooking methods, also joins the conversation.

**Direct Link:** <http://iowapublicradio.org/post/sioux-chef-revives-native-american-recipes#stream/0>

## **Phoenix Students Restore School To Reclaim Native American Identity**

June 27, 2015 8:50 AM ET  
Christopher Livesay



Former band student Rosalee Talahongva in front of her old music building, which is being turned into a Native American cultural center.

From 1891 until 1990, just shy of a century, Phoenix Indian School boarded students from Navajo, Apache and other tribes across the Southwest.

Patty Talahongva is a Hopi who went to Phoenix Indian until 1979. By then, attendance was voluntary. That wasn't the case for generations of students before her.

"There's a well-known quote that said 'Kill the Indian, save the man.' That was the mindset," she says. "When the students arrived at school, their hair was cut, so they couldn't wear it in their traditional way. Their clothing was changed. They wanted to bring us to the boarding schools ... to be basically white people who were Christian."

It was part of a U.S. government policy intended to "Westernize" Native American children by sending them away from their tribes to boarding schools — often against their will.

By the time Talahongva lived here, conditions had greatly improved. But traditions were still suppressed.

Take the band, for instance.

"Tribes, we have our own music, but that music was never incorporated into 'The Band,' " she says. "These were European musical instruments. So how much more white can you get?"

Rosalee Talahongva, Patty's sister, played clarinet in the band and can still hear her conductor.

"We'd mess up and he'd tap his stand, 'Tap tap tap! Everybody stop stop! You did that wrong! You come in on this count! One and two and one and two!' " she says. "One time,

I think it was the trumpet section that kept missing that beat, and finally, he literally wrote a note and said, 'Do I need to invite you to play? Dear so and so ...' And he was writing this note, it was the funniest thing. Well now it is."

The Indian School band made a name for itself nationwide, marching twice in the Rose Bowl Parade.

It's a complicated legacy. Patty Talahongva and her old classmates are proud of their band's accomplishments, but she acknowledges they were also wheeled out for PR.

"The band was actually used as a recruitment tool," she says. "The idea was [to] show how great the band is and tell the kids from the reservation schools, 'Hey, pick Phoenix Indian High School and you can play in our cool band!' They would have concerts and the whole city of Phoenix would show up. It was like their little public outreach."

Only three of Phoenix Indian's 29 buildings still stand, and the band room is one of them. The risers are gone, and blobs of glue residue on the walls mark where sound panels once hung.

Today, Talahongva is working with two local Native American nonprofits to restore the defunct band building and turn it into a Native American cultural center in the heart of Phoenix.

The new space will be a classroom, a gallery, a reflection space and of course, a concert area right where band students used to slog through John Philip Sousa.

Students like Talahongva's sister Rosalee haven't been back in the music room since she was a teenager.

"Just this floor! This floor is the same," she says. "So it still had that echoey kind of sound when you walked on it. That just kind of brings things back."

Now the music room will be a place where Native Americans can remember their past while reclaiming their musical identity.

Cano Sanchez and David Montour of the band Clan-Destine recently stopped by to check out the acoustics for future concerts with an impromptu performance, the first here in 25 years. Organizers suspect it's also the first time that Native American music is being celebrated under this roof, rather than marginalized.

"There were some lonely children here, at one point," Sanchez says. "Look how far we've come. You can hold on to tragedy — you should always remember it — but you should learn from it and move forward. It makes me very proud and fills my soul today to be able to come here and bless the area with our being, with our presence, and hopefully be blessed as well."



Such is the power of music, he says, especially when you get to play your own.

*Archival audio of Phoenix Indian School band, courtesy of the [Heard Museum](#), Phoenix, Ariz. The date of the recording is unknown.*

**Direct Link:** <http://www.npr.org/2015/06/27/417844637/phoenix-students-restore-school-to-reclaim-native-american-identity>

## **Native American Code Talkers From WWII Posthumously Honored**

CROW AGENCY, Mont. — Jun 27, 2015, 2:30 PM ET

Four Native American [World War II](#) code talkers from [Montana](#) have been posthumously honored for their service.

The families of the four accepted Congressional Gold Medals for their ancestors' service Friday during a ceremony in Crow Agency.

Code talkers were tribal members who spoke their native tongue during the war to keep the enemy from intercepting messages.

The four Crow code talkers posthumously honored are Henry Old Coyote, Barney Old Coyote, Cyril Not Afraid and Sampson Birdinground Jr.

The ceremony included a flyover with two Blackhawk Helicopters and a B-1 Bomber.

**Direct Link:** <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/native-american-code-talkers-wwii-posthumously-honored-32074430>

## **Sen. Schmit: Native American achievement gap a 'black eye' for Minnesota**



Dennis Olson

Posted: Friday, June 26, 2015 9:13 pm | *Updated: 9:31 pm, Fri Jun 26, 2015.*

Brett Boese, [bboese@postbulletin.com](mailto:bboese@postbulletin.com)

Dennis Olson considers Minnesota the birthplace of Native American education nearly 50 years ago, but Sen. Matt Schmit, D-Red Wing, says the lingering achievement gap has given the state a "black eye."

Prominent Minnesota Sen. Walter Mondale co-authored a groundbreaking report in 1969 titled "Indian Education: A National Tragedy," which prompted the country's first conference on the issue. It was held in Minneapolis, where the University of Minnesota soon became one of the first schools to offer an American Indian Studies program.

Fast forward to 2011, where Minnesota's Office of Indian Education department had been rendered nearly powerless thanks to a series of budget cuts. Three field offices were consolidated to just one in 2002, then the director and most staffers were eliminated in 2007. Graduation rates of Native Americans had plummeted to just 42 percent — the worst in the nation — by 2011.

The state's rehabilitation of that disastrous decade has been slow and painful, but it began when the Office of Indian Education received funding to reinstate a director in the fall of 2012. Olson was hired just weeks before National Indian Education Association President Heather Shotton called a state of emergency for Indian education. It took two years for President Barack Obama to [echo that declaration](#) in a report that marked the first sitting president to address Native American education since JFK.

As if Olson needed a reminder that it would be an uphill battle.

"Now, we're just trying to rebuild that support ... and put (Minnesota's Indian Education) back on the map," Olson said recently during a weeklong cultural seminar hosted at Prairie Island Indian Community near Red Wing. "Going from the birthplace of Indian education to where we were in 2007 ... yikes. Talk about a big backslide."

The Minnesota Legislature codified the Olson's director position in 2013, which protects it from future cuts. That also marked a critical first step for getting Native American issues back in front of policy makers.

Olson organized an Indian Education workshop with representatives from around the state to identify priorities in 2014. He then spent three hours detailing critical funding needs before Minnesota House and Senate committees this past winter.

It proved to be an eye-opening experience.

"A lot of the state legislators don't know where we've been, where we are and where we're going," Olson said. "We had legislators coming up to us afterwards saying, 'Thank you so much for sharing that information.' This is an opportunity we haven't had in decades to elevate the education of Native American students."

An education bill championed by Gov. Mark Dayton and carried by Sen. Tom Saxhaug, D-Grand Rapids, ultimately was approved earlier this month that essentially quadruples state funding for Native American education. It covers all 138 districts with 20-plus Indian students — or 93 percent of Minnesota's Native American students — whereas the old formula, which has been widely panned, covered just 32 districts on a rotating, competitive basis.

Red Wing's 150 Native American students, for example, will benefit from about \$70,000 in new funding starting with the 2015-16 school year after receiving no state dollars in the previous 15-plus years.

"This is good news — and we haven't had good news in many years," Darlene St. Clair, a Native American who teaches American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota, said last week while visiting Prairie Island Indian Community.

Graduation rates in Minnesota have started to rebound since an all-time low in 2011, hitting nearly 51 percent in the 2014. Though that still leaves a significant achievement gap, it also represents an important step in the right direction.

Sen. Schmit is hopeful the new funding will accelerate that progress.

"It offers a lot of promise," he said. "The situation in Red Wing and throughout the state is a challenging one. It's not simply an idea of (throwing) money (at) a problem, but I'm optimistic that this will make a big difference."

**Direct Link:** [http://www.postbulletin.com/news/politics/sen-schmit-native-american-achievement-gap-a-black-eye-for/article\\_69592b47-744d-5448-bae2-b9c9a3be0380.html](http://www.postbulletin.com/news/politics/sen-schmit-native-american-achievement-gap-a-black-eye-for/article_69592b47-744d-5448-bae2-b9c9a3be0380.html)

## **Single Mom, Businesswoman Contributes to Native American's \$2 Billion Economic Impact in Colorado**

[Lynn Armitage](#)

6/26/15

Single mom Andrea Leshner was inspired by her special-needs daughter to start her own business. One day, while doing research on her child's medical condition, she discovered something eye-opening. "I learned that more Native American children have birth defects than any other minority group in the United States," she recalled.

She had a lightbulb moment: She would start a nonprofit organization someday to help Native American children born with extremely challenging health problems. "But I realized the only way to do that is to make money, so I created a consulting firm first," said Leshner, previously a consultant for Northrup Grumman.

A-sa-ma-di (a Cherokee words for "smart") Business Solutions, headquartered in Denver, is now celebrating its sixth year in business. "My company has doubled in size and we will be generating over \$5 million in revenue this year," said its 37-year-old president and owner, who launched her company with a copy 50,000 investment. Her staff includes 12 full-time employees, as well as independent contractors. "We have offices across the nation now and are getting ready to move into the international space."

A-sa-ma-di offers high-end business and technical consulting services for commercial and federal clients, such as Dish Network, Teleflora, the National Park Service and Library of Congress. Leshner, a Cherokee who grew up in the 14 counties of the Cherokee Nation in Nowata, Oklahoma, is still keeping her eye on the prize. While her company is doing very well, she said when it reaches about \$35 million in revenue, she will be able to fully fund that not-for-profit organization for Native children that she dreams of starting.

Leshner credits her success to her "crazy willpower and perseverance," and to the Rocky Mountain Indian Chamber of Commerce (RMICC), where she turned to for help as a young and inexperienced entrepreneur. "When I started my business, I had no idea how to do it. I had even bought a book called 'How to Start a Business for Dummies.' The RMICC was critical in helping me understand the steps I needed to take, like how to incorporate my business."

Recently, the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA) completed a three-year study on the economic impact that Native-owned businesses have had on the state's economy, for which Leshner served as an advisor. According to preliminary data in the Economic Impact Study (a final report will officially be released in July), Native business owners have created more than 16,000 new jobs and added about \$2.2 billion to Colorado's economy.

"Natives make up only 2 percent of the entire state's population, so this \$2 billion impact is really big," said CCIA Executive Director Ernest House Jr. in an interview with *The Dolores Star*.

Leshar believes these findings could be surprising to some people. “I think there are some perceptions that maybe Natives don’t provide to the economy, but take from it. I believe it is still a mindset from long ago that was cast upon our people, and it is an untrue one,” she said. “However, this study shows that Native businesses really do have a strong place in the economy. When Natives get together, and support and help each other, powerful things can happen.”

*Lynn Armitage is a contributing business writer and an enrolled member of the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin.*

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/06/26/single-mom-businesswoman-contributes-native-americans-2-billion-economic-impact-colorado>

## Burlington resident speaks about his the Native American heritage



Burlington resident Earl Burley speaks before a crowd of more than 70 people at the Burlington Historical Society meeting last month. COURTESY PHOTO/ DAWN TEXEIRA

By Chris Warren  
[chwarren@wickedlocal.com](mailto:chwarren@wickedlocal.com)

June 27. 2015 10:42AM

Earl Stanley Burley wrote to the [Burlington Historical Society](#) a few months ago, asking if there might be any interest in a presentation on Native American history.

Society president Mary Nohelty invited him to speak last month, and according to Nohelty, not only was there interest, it was the largest crowd to ever attend a society event, as more than 70 people attended.

Burley is a Burlington resident and member of the [Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma](#). It is a small tribe with a few thousand members, most of whom live in Oklahoma.

Burley did not arrive at the historical society meeting alone. Other speakers were Burlington resident Virginia Lewis, who has conducted extensive research and made tri-folds of the Ponca Indian history that were displayed at the gathering; Jay Winter Nightwolf, founder and host of Washington, D.C., radio talk show "American Indian Truths;" Morgan "Mwalin" James Peters, a member of the Wampanoag Tribe of Cape Cod and UMass-Dartmouth professor; and Stewart Weeks, founder of the Center for American Studies in Concord.

Burley, opened the presentation by saying, "This story begins in 1804," and described five treaties that with each iteration imposed more oppressive conditions upon the Ponca Tribe.

The fifth treaty, the Fort Laramie Treaty, signed in 1868, was the most unfavorable from the Poncas' perspective. This treaty involved negotiations between the United States and the Lakota Sioux, in which the U.S. government mistakenly gave the remaining Ponca land in Nebraska to the Sioux, who were tribal enemies.

Then in 1877, the Poncas were removed from their homeland in Nebraska by the U.S. government and forced to walk close to 500 miles to the designated Indian Territory in Oklahoma. Burley said records show the group walked through thunderstorms, tornadoes and other inclement weather. When they arrived at their destination, there were no supplies, no food and no shelter.

One-third of the estimated 700 Poncas died of starvation, exposure or disease between 1877 and 1878.

Burley said the people of Massachusetts rallied to the aid of the Poncas, beginning when Ponca Chief Standing Bear gave a lecture on Indian rights in Boston in 1879. Future author and Massachusetts native Helen Hunt Jackson heard him speak and began a lifetime of advocacy for the Poncas and later other Native American tribes, as well.

Also in 1879, the Boston Indian Citizen Committee formed, which raised legal funds to defend Native Americans and acted as a watchdog on their behalf by inspecting U.S. Indian agencies and schools throughout the country and reporting their observations. Lewis brought one of the reports, more than 500 pages long, to the presentation for audience members to peruse.

Burley then invited Lewis to speak, and she said, "It's amazing that a woman (Jackson) who was not even allowed to vote had so much influence by writing letters to every single Congressman in Washington, D.C., on behalf of the Poncas."

In those letters, Jackson took the government to task on its misconduct, corruption and history of broken treaties with the Poncas. Jackson also wrote two books, "A Century of Dishonor" (1881) and "Ramona" (1884), that describe the mistreatment of Native Americans by the U.S. government. "Ramona" is still in circulation.

Lewis said Jackson was also integral to raising legal funds for Standing Bear's 1879 trial, in which he sued the U.S. government for the right to be considered as a human being. He won, but it would be later discovered that his designation as a person only applied to him as an individual and not the rest of the tribe members. It would not be until 1924 that Native Americans would become United States citizens, when the Indian Citizen Act was signed into law, said Burley.

Nightwolf, a member of the Echota Cherokee Nation of Alabama and one of the founders of the National Congress of Black American Indians, talked about the injustices done to the Native Americans in the past and said, "What we must do is facilitate this healing (among people)."

He also spoke about healing the environment and said, "The Earth is rebelling. If we don't change, it won't matter whose rights we're talking about...because there won't be any people."

Peters said he was pleased to see so many elders in the crowd, then joked that based on the looks some of the people were giving him for saying that, he was eyeing where the exits were in the room. He clarified his remark so the audience had a better understanding that he was not trying to insult them by insinuating they were old, but was instead complimenting them. In Native American culture, elders are revered, respected and honored for their wisdom.

Weeks spoke briefly and said that if people formed a circle and held hands with their eyes closed, they would realize that a person's skin color doesn't matter and could learn a lot from each other.

At the end of the presentation, Burley opened up the floor for questions. One audience member asked, "How did you end up here in Burlington?"

Burley said, "Because of my wife and children. They love it here in Burlington. It feels like home."

Some of the people in the audience spontaneously responded to him and said, "It is home."

**Ponca Tribe treaties** In 1804, European explorers Lewis and Clark signed a treaty of friendship and peace with Ponca Chief Shudegach (pronounced shu-da-ga-chee), which means "The Smoke" in the Ponca language. The next treaty was ratified and signed by President James Monroe in 1817 and "The Smoke" signing on behalf of his tribe. According to Earl Stanley Burley, it was a treaty of amity and friendship, forgiveness for any offenses tribe members had committed and protection from enemy tribes. The third treaty was ratified and signed by President John Q. Adams in 1826, which established a map depicting the split between Ponca tribal land and land that belonged to the United States territories. The next treaty, ratified in 1856, involved the ceding of million of acres of land by the Poncas to the United States for 11 cents an acre. Representing the Poncas



were four signers, one of which is Burley's great-great-grandfather, Chief Mitchell "Washcomoni" Cerrie. The last treaty the Poncas signed was in 1865. It authorized the cessation of 30,000 acres of land in Kansas and Nebraska to the United States. In 1868, the Fort Laramie Treaty, involved negotiations between the United States and the Lakota Sioux, in which the U.S. government mistakenly gave the remaining Ponca land in Nebraska to the Sioux, who were tribal enemies.

Source: Historical records, copies of treaties, provided by Virginia Lewis

**Direct Link:**

<http://burlington.wickedlocal.com/article/20150627/NEWS/150626938?template=printart>

## **Study reveals little-known history of Native Americans around Duluth**

By [Grace Pastoor](#) on Jun 26, 2015 at 7:34 p.m.

Duluth City Hall and the St. Louis County Courthouse stand on land given to Ojibwe leader Chief Buffalo in an 1854 treaty, historian Bruce White recounted this week — and he said that's a part of the city's history more residents should be aware of.

A perceived lack of knowledge about the history of Native Americans in Duluth is something the Duluth Indigenous Commission — along with White, of Turnstone Historical Research in St. Paul, and archaeologists from Two Pines Resource Group — hopes to remedy through the findings of a yearslong study that will be presented Saturday.

White began working with the commission after it received two grants — one for planning, one for the project — from the Minnesota Historical Society in 2012 and 2013, respectively. White said that when he spoke with the commission, members expressed concerns about the lack of awareness of Native American contributions to the city.

"When I came and met people, the first thing that they said was, they felt as though Native or indigenous people in Duluth were invisible," he said. "They felt as though within the community in Duluth ... there's a sense that they don't even count."

The study focused on sites that were and are important to Duluth's indigenous communities, as well as indigenous people who had an impact on the city.

Europeans arrived in Duluth in the 1600s, and French soldier Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Lhut, attempted to secure trapping rights in the area that would become the city. Though the French are said to have "discovered" Duluth, White said the credit is misplaced.

"When the Frenchman Sieur du Lhut came here — you know he's credited with being a kind of discoverer — there were indigenous people here to greet him," White said. "Yet he's the one whose name was applied to the city, and there's a statue of him up at UMD.

...

"The main contribution (of Native Americans) is that this is their place. This is the indigenous place and this is where they lived for generations."

White said he did not want to reveal specific locations in the city that are important to indigenous people, so as not to draw attention to sites that could be vulnerable. But he suggested the city and the commission find a way to make information about indigenous contributions more easily accessible.

Some of White's suggestions include putting up plaques and statues at important sites, or offering historic tours or developing a smartphone app that would tell users information about sites with significance to the Native American community — essentially, anything to grab people's attention.

"The problem I think that we were dealing with is: How do we get over this lack of interest or this lack of knowledge? How do we get people to be interested in this aspect of the history of Duluth?" White said.

Chief Buffalo was an important figure in the region, both to the Ojibwe people and to the U.S. government. Busts of Chief Buffalo are displayed in the U.S. Capitol today, an honor White thinks Duluth should replicate.

Based on his research, White said he also believes the significance of Canal Park to indigenous people should be emphasized alongside the area's well-known maritime history. According to White, the ship canal actually runs through an area that used to be a portage used by Native Americans.

White said he hopes that, once the information from the study is presented to the community, the learning will continue.

"I think whenever you do a project like this, sometimes you end up feeling like, 'Gosh, I could just keep working on this, there's so much more,' " he said.

### **If you go**

**What:** Duluth Indigenous Commission meeting presenting the results of a study on the indigenous history of Duluth

**When:** 1 p.m. Saturday

**Where:** Trepanier Hall, 212 W Second St., Duluth

**Direct Link:** <http://www.duluthnewtribune.com/news/3775069-study-reveals-little-known-history-native-americans-around-duluth>

## **\$380M left over in Native American farmer settlement**

Jonathan Ellis, USA TODAY 6:05 a.m. EDT June 28, 2015



SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — A federal judge on Monday will hear opinions on what to do with \$380 million left over from a settlement that was meant to reimburse Native Americans who were discriminated against by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

District Judge Emmet Sullivan has received hundreds of comments, most of them from Native Americans who argue the money should be distributed in another round of payments — a move that the federal government opposes.

The money is left over from a 2010 settlement with the USDA. In 1999, a group of Native Americans filed a lawsuit against the government, arguing that USDA discriminated against Indian farmers and ranchers who sought loans from the department. USDA paid \$680 million and another \$80 million in debt relief to settle *Keepseagle v. Vilsack*, a similar move the department made to settle other lawsuits brought by minority groups.

The settlement established a claims process for Native Americans who alleged discrimination, and it included a provision that any leftover money would be distributed to nonprofit groups that help Native American farmers and ranchers.

At the time, the parties figured there would only be about \$1 million left over once the claims were processed, said Joseph Sellers, the class counsel. But in the end, there were only about 3,600 successful claimants — far fewer than originally estimated.

"We realized we were going to have a lot more money left over," Sellers said.

Some of the claimants who received payments wanted another round of disbursements. But the government opposed another round of payments because officials did not want Native American farmers and ranchers to receive more money than what blacks, Hispanics and other minorities received in their settlements, Sellers said.

Gwen Sparks, a USDA spokeswoman, declined to comment.

After negotiations, the government agreed to allow the remaining money to be put into a trust. If approved, 10% would be distributed to nonprofits by an advisory board, and the remaining 90% would be distributed over the next 20 years by a foundation to nonprofits that help Indian ranchers and farmers.

"The ends of justice demand that this money should be distributed to the class members instead of providing a historic and unwarranted payout for charitable organizations."

Marilyn Keepseagle, one of the original class litigants

Absent the agreement, the federal government could have demanded that the remaining money be returned, Sellers said.

But the agreement is deeply unpopular with many of the Indians who received payments. They argue that as victims of discrimination, they should get the left over money.

In a motion filed last month, Marilyn Keepseagle, one of the original class litigants, said that Native American farmers and ranchers were the victims of discrimination, not the charitable organizations that would get the money. Keepseagle proposed that the money either be paid out to the 3,600 successful claimants, or that another claims period be opened for Native Americans that did not file a claim the first time.

"The ends of justice demand that this money should be distributed to the class members instead of providing a historic and unwarranted payout for charitable organizations," Keepseagle said in her motion.

Marshall Matz, a lawyer representing Keepseagle and other Native Americans who want another disbursement,

predicted that whatever happens, there would likely be an appeal.

"I don't know why you would need a foundation — to create a foundation — to do unspecified good things when you can give the money to the people who can prove they were damaged," Matz said.

*Ellis also reports for the (Sioux Falls, S.D.) Argus-Leader*

**Direct Link:** <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/06/28/left-usda-discrimination-settlement/29413251/>

## **Native Children Are Facing A 'National Emergency.' Now Congress Is Pushing To Address It.**

Posted: 06/27/2015 7:30 am EDT Updated: 06/27/2015 5:59 pm EDT

[Julian Brave Noisecat](#)



Robert Looks Twice grew up in a trailer with his grandmother, uncle and eight cousins on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Looks Twice, along with two other young Native people from Pine Ridge, was a subject of Diane Sawyer's "[Children of the Plains](#)," a special that first aired on ABC in 2011.

For many Americans, "Children of the Plains" was a startling glimpse into the poverty and despair affecting the lives of Native Americans. Five cousins share a single bedroom with a collapsing ceiling. People carry the scars of generations of alcoholism and addiction. They spend their days broken and weeping in the quivering grass of the hills where their ancestors -- Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull -- captured Custer's American flag at the [Battle of the Little Bighorn](#) in 1876; where the 7th cavalry massacred the Lakota and poured their bodies into a mass grave at [Wounded Knee](#) in 1890. This is what happened to the first peoples of this land. This is the lot left to their children.

Now, from impoverished reservations in the West, to Congress and the White House in the East, there is a growing bipartisan movement to document and address the lack of resources and opportunities in Native communities.

In June 2014, President Barack Obama [visited](#) the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe -- the people of Sitting Bull -- on the border of North and South Dakota, becoming only the [eighth president](#) to visit an Indian reservation while in office. During his visit, Obama met with Lakota and Dakota youth, whose stories of forestalled opportunities, drinking and suicide moved him to [tears](#). After the president's visit, the administration increased its efforts in Indian Country, producing reports, programs and initiatives designed to support [Native youth](#).

After Obama's visit, in November 2014, the Department of Justice released a [report](#) detailing Native children's unhealthy exposure to violence. The DOJ report was soon followed by the White House's [2014 Native Youth Report](#) on the state of education in Indian Country.

Together, these reports told an alarming story of overwhelming poverty, epidemic suicide, combat-level rates of PTSD and low educational attainment among Native youth. Here are some of the more striking statistics:

- More than one in three Native children live in poverty.
- The high school graduation rate for Native students is 67 percent -- the lowest of any ethnic group in the country. At Bureau of Indian Education schools, the graduation rate is 53 percent, compared to the U.S. average of 80 percent.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Native youth aged 15 to 24, and occurs at 2.5 times the national rate.
- Twenty-two percent of Native youth suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder - exceeding or matching PTSD rates among Afghanistan, Iraq and Gulf War veterans, and almost three times the 8 percent rate of PTSD in the general population.

Sens. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) introduced a [bill](#) in January to create a commission on the status of Native children.

Last week, Reps. Betty McCollum (D-Minn.) and Tom Cole (R-Okla.) introduced the [House version](#) of the bill.

The legislation would create an 11-member commission to study the programs, grants and services for Native children that are already provided by agencies and tribes. The commission would then produce a report and work to advance the longer-term goal of increasing coordination between service providers, making better use of resources and strengthening partnerships with the private sector to measurably improve outcomes for [Native children](#).

Heitkamp, who served as attorney general of North Dakota from 1993 to 2001, has a strong background working with tribes in her state. When she arrived in Washington, D.C., in [2013](#), she made Native children a top priority. At her first bipartisan [dinner with other women senators](#), Heitkamp's colleagues asked what legislation she hoped to introduce while in Washington. She reportedly told her colleagues that "[her] passion is Native American children." Murkowski overheard Heitkamp's answer and crossed the room to talk to her. They quickly became friends -- and out of that friendship, a bipartisan bill to create the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children was born.

"When you give the statistics, it should be a national emergency," Heitkamp told The Huffington Post. "I give the United States government an 'F' in protecting children in

Indian Country. It's been bad for a long time, and we haven't addressed it, and we've let it get worse."

Cole, an enrolled member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma and one of only two Native Americans in Congress, said the federal government has a responsibility to Indian nations.

"A lot of these kids are growing up on trust land, on reservations, where we really are the people that are supposed to be providing decent education and a decent set of opportunities and a secure and safe environment -- and historically, the federal government simply hasn't," he said.

"An extraordinary amount of land was surrendered in exchange for certain commitments that, by and large, haven't been kept," he added.

Robert Looks Twice and the Oglala Lakota of Pine Ridge, who live on land promised to them in the [Fort Laramie Treaty](#) of 1868, know this well. The vast majority of the land promised to the Great Sioux Nation in that treaty, including the sacred Black Hills, was [illegally seized](#) by settlers in 1876. With their land taken and the basic services guaranteed to them by the federal government neglected -- including education, housing and healthcare -- the Lakota, like Native peoples across this continent, have struggled to live with dignity in the wake of dispossession.

The proposed commission makes no promises regarding broken treaties and makes no legislative commitments. The last Congress passed only [22 out of 122 bills](#) and resolutions related to Indian affairs, so it's unlikely that this legislation will be able to break through the partisan gridlock. Nonetheless, lawmakers and stakeholders from all political backgrounds are hopeful.

Former Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), who founded the Aspen Institute's Center for Native American Youth after retiring from Congress, says that now is the time.

"Timing is everything, and I think that the president of the United States went to an Indian reservation this past year, and we had a White House youth event dealing with the issues and opportunities for Indian children, so there's been a lot going on," he said.

Despite tensions between Obama and the Republican Party, Cole offered the highest praise for the current administration's record in Indian Country.

"The president has an excellent record on Native American affairs -- one of the best records in the 20th century, without a doubt," he said.

"Indian issues really aren't Democratic or Republican-focused, they actually cut across," he added. "It's actually one of the areas [where] we cooperate."



Ahniwake Rose, executive director of the National Indian Education Association, says a bipartisan bill has been a long time coming. "This commission that [Heitkamp] has offered up has really been what education stakeholders across the country have been asking for."

Rose says the commission's holistic approach to the range of issues affecting Native children can bring lawmakers together to improve the situation. "What's interesting about this commission is that it will be able to start moving forward and offering some legislative changes," she said. "Instead of just maybe being a study that sits on the shelf, this can really do some impactful, meaningful change."

Dorgan says that starts by engaging Indian nations. "You have to engage tribes and tribal authorities," he said. "You have to engage parents and children, because if you don't have engagement with the affected people, you're not going to ever begin to solve these things."

With [566 federally recognized tribes across the country](#), that is no small task. "Our nations are so unique that a cookie-cutter model won't work," said Rose.

Despite the vast and deep-rooted challenges of working in Indian Country, Rose is hopeful.

"Our population is small and it's really easily hidden," she said. "That will be the power of this commission: to shine a spotlight on these faces and on these stories, so that every senator and every congressperson is able to relate and bring those stories to the work that they do."

**Direct Link:** [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/27/native-american-commission\\_n\\_7665842.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/27/native-american-commission_n_7665842.html)

## **Elders treat ills with mind-body medicine, native healing traditions**

The path to healing comes full circle for two Indian elders bringing mind-body medicine to their community.

By [Allie Shah](#) Star Tribune  
June 28, 2015 — 5:54pm

The women sat in a circle — their eyes closed and their ears tuned into the soothing voice of Donna La Chapelle.

"Soft," she coached, as the handful of mostly American Indian women in their 60s inhaled through their noses.

“Belly,” she said, signaling them to exhale from their mouths.

Belly breathing relaxes the nerves connecting the brain to the gut, explained La Chapelle, an elder in residence at the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center in Minneapolis. “You feel better and you can let out all the fatigue and worry,” she said.

This breathing exercise is one of many mind-body practices that La Chapelle and fellow elder Linda Eagle Speaker are blending with traditional American Indian therapies to treat physical and emotional pains.

Their mission: to improve the overall health of the Indian community with mind-body techniques that are culturally meaningful. The exercises incorporate elements of Indian culture.



Maria McCoy raised her arms in a moving exercise at a talking circle run by healer Donna LaChapelle at the Minnesota Indian Women’s Center in Minneapolis.

The duo recently completed two years of training with the esteemed Center for Mind-Body Medicine in Washington, D.C., and are now among the first Indian healers in the country certified by the center.

“Our dream,” La Chapelle said, “is to take this to all of our communities. If we have enough Indian people trained, the movement can begin.” This movement would spread the healing power of mind-body medicine throughout the Indian populace.

But first they must plant seeds.

They are getting help through the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, which recently was awarded one of 12 inaugural seed grants from the George Family Foundation to introduce integrative medicine practices to communities that haven’t had access before.

The \$25,000 grant to the center will be used to host Indian gatherings on mind-body medicine and support training for elders and spiritual teachers.

The philosophy of mind-body medicine — that our thoughts and emotions have an impact on our physical health — is a natural fit with traditional Indian beliefs that healing the mind and spirit will help heal the body.

Breathing, movement and social support are used in many Indian ceremonies, said Suzanne Koepplinger, director of the Catalyst Initiative, the grant program. “Mind-body medicine is not that far afield,” she said.

Eagle Speaker, whose traditional Indian name is Holy Medicine Shining Woman, comes from a long line of herbalists. She works with homeless women and with girls who have been trafficked for sex to help them deal with the trauma they’ve experienced.



Nelda Goodman held an eagle feather as part of a talking circle.

Both she and La Chapelle also help their Indian clients heal from “historical trauma” wounds — depression, chemical dependency and other issues resulting from the loss of Indian population, land and culture over generations.

Three years ago, La Chapelle found herself searching for new tools to help her people.

“I knew something was missing,” she said. “I wondered, ‘How do you heal?’ The universe responded.”

She met Dr. Kathleen Farah, a family physician with Children’s Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota who specializes in integrative medicine.

Farah demonstrated the methods to La Chapelle and Eagle Speaker and encouraged them to apply for additional training through the Center for Mind-Body Medicine.

The center has used the techniques in many settings to help people heal from traumatic experiences. One notable case involves treating children living in Gaza and Israel traumatized by war using the same exercises that La Chapelle and Eagle Speaker are using in their group sessions.

“The model is to train people to go into their communities and work with groups. They do simple meditation, simple guided imagery, etc. — all of which helps the brain heal from trauma,” Farah explained.

Already, word is starting to spread across the Indian community about the benefits of mind-body medicine, the women said. Eagle Speaker was invited to visit the Leech Lake reservation during its recent annual youth conference to talk about the techniques.

“Part of it is just beginning that healing process for our people,” Eagle Speaker said. “If we can heal 10 people, there are other generations coming up after them.”

Back at the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, the circle of women gathered burned sage and passed an eagle feather as each one took turns “checking in” about their thoughts and emotions. At the end, they practiced “shaking,” a mind-body method of relieving stress by moving the whole body.

They laughed as they shook their arms and legs, danced to music, and came back to the circle once again to bid farewell for the night.

“It’s holding that sacred space for people because we all need to share,” said La Chapelle. “People have a lot of stories — and maybe even a lot of heartache — that they haven’t been able to release.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.startribune.com/a-pair-of-indian-elders-integrate-mind-body-medicine-with-native-healing-traditions-for-better-health/310149071/>

## **US makes it easier for Native American tribes to obtain federal recognition**

Obama administration changes 37-year-old process that makes Native American tribes able to set up their own government, legal system and taxes



Indian groups seeking recognition will no longer have to show that outside parties identified them as an Indian entity dating back to 1900. Photograph: John Locher/AP

Associated Press in Washington

Monday 29 June 2015 16.00 BST Last modified on Monday 29 June 2015 16.56 BST

The [Obama administration](#) is making it easier for some tribes to obtain federal recognition, addressing a longstanding grievance held by many Native Americans.

The new regulation updates a 37-year-old process that has been roundly criticised because of the many years and mounds of paperwork that typically went into each application.

The effort to address those criticisms generated a backlash of its own, with some lawmakers and existing tribes with casino operations complaining that the administration's original proposals set the bar too low.

The Obama administration made changes in the final rule that answers many of those concerns, but not all. Kevin Washburn, an assistant secretary at the Department of Interior, planned to announce the regulation on Monday during a National Congress of American Indians conference in [Minnesota](#).

Federal acknowledgment means a tribe is treated as a nation within a nation, able to set up its own government, legal system, taxes and fees. Recognition also brings critical federal investments in medical care, housing and education. It also can lead to tribes opening casinos through a separate approval process.

Washburn said the regulatory changes will greatly enhance transparency by letting the public see most of the documents submitted by the petitioning groups via the internet. The changes will also give tribal groups facing rejection the chance to take their case to an administrative judge before a final determination is made.

The interior secretary, Sally Jewell, said the new regulations for tribal recognition "make good on a promise to our First Americans to clarify, expedite and honour a meaningful process for federal acknowledgment".

The most scrutinised changes will be the new criteria that must be met for recognition to occur.

Groups seeking recognition will no longer have to show that outside parties identified them as a Native American entity dating back to 1900. Washburn said the requirement clashed with the reality of the times. Many [Native Americans](#) were attempting to hide their identity from outside sources out of fear they would be discriminated against, or worse.

"They would have been crazy not to have," said Washburn, a member of the Chickasaw Nation in [Oklahoma](#).

Some federally recognised tribes had urged that the requirement be kept.

“We cannot understand why a legitimate petitioner could not produce external documentation of its existence,” Robert Martin, chairman of the Morongo Band of Mission Indians, testified during a recent congressional hearing.

Petitioners also had to show that their tribe has existed as a community and exercised political control over its members since first contact with European settlers, or as early as 1789. The proposed regulation had changed the threshold to 1934.

After much pushback, the final rule sets the date at 1900 – more than a century of documentation that includes “a time when it was dangerous to be Indian”, Washburn said.

Under the current system, which began in 1978, the government has recognised 17 tribes and rejected the petitions of 34 other groups.

The Obama administration had envisioned giving groups who were denied federal recognition another opportunity to re-petition the government. That provision wasn’t included in the final rule.

“It would be unfair to allow people to come in and re-petition when there are people in line who haven’t had their first chance to make their case,” Washburn said.

Lawmakers in [Connecticut](#) had been particularly critical of allowing previously denied groups the chance to re-petition, and the change deals a blow to four Native American groups whose petitions were rejected in 2005.

Congress also has the authority to recognise tribes.

The Obama administration is moving ahead with the regulation even as lawmakers had expressly warned it to pull it back. A spending bill in the House contains language banning the Interior Department from using federal money to implement or enforce the regulatory change.

In all, there are 566 federal recognised tribes. Hundreds more want to join their ranks.

Arlinda Locklear, an attorney in Washington who has worked on behalf of about a dozen tribes seeking federal acknowledgment, called the current tribal recognition process heartbreaking, because it is so demanding and takes so long, often more than a decade.

“You have a whole generation of people who just die while they’re waiting for it to happen,” Locklear said.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/29/indian-tribes-native-americans-federal-recognition>

# **Our View: Focus on Native American students needed**

Posted: Monday, June 29, 2015 10:25 am

Brenda Cassellius expects the next decade will see a change. The state's education commissioner says added funding for schools with significant populations of Native American students likely will turn around a dismal achievement gap.

"It's going to be one of those pieces of legislation that we look back on in 10 years and ask ourselves, 'How did we live with ourselves with a 50 percent graduation rate for Indian kids, and we just kept looking away,'" she told the Post-Bulletin Editorial Board earlier this year during a visit to Rochester to promote the governor's original education budget.

While Gov. Mark Dayton didn't get everything he was asking for, the special session following his veto of the original K-12 education bill came close with an additional \$12.5 million for schools with 20 or more Native American students. For the Red Wing School District, that means about \$70,000 a year.

Rochester Public Schools will see about \$45,000 a year to address unique needs of its Native American students.

While we're not convinced throwing more money at the problem is the right answer to fully address the achievement gap seen among Native American students, there is some evidence it can help.

As the state struggles with the nation's lowest Native American graduation rate, Red Wing students from the Prairie Island Indian Community have proven it doesn't need to be that way. They have repeatedly logged graduation rates of 90 percent or more. However, the Red Wing district's overall Native American graduation rate was near the national average at 62 percent in 2011.

It indicates something is working for the Prairie Island students, and that is likely the liaison program connecting Native American families with school officials in an attempt to overcome cultural barriers and other issues impeding academic success.

But such programs take funding for time and training, and not all schools can invest in the additional tutoring and outreach provided in Red Wing.

Cassellius sees funding as a key issue in tackling the achievement gap among Native American students. She said looking at the state's 20 highest poverty schools reveals 41



percent of the combined students in those districts were Native American. "I couldn't even speak when I saw that," she said.

While such findings point to possible relief through added funding, we also note that extending such relief and making sure the funds are well spent will be crucial. The Indian Education Act of 1988 already provides some guidance, said Dennis Olson, the state's director of the Office of Indian Education. More oversight will come with his office's review of programs using the funds. "We really want to stress this is not just general fund dollars," he said.

In Red Wing, the new state funds will help stabilize funding for the liaison program, which is currently coming from Prairie Island and federal sources.

With stabilized finding, we hope the district can continue to extend its success to all its Native American students and eventually become a model for success to be mirrored in other parts of the state.

The numbers are shocking, and we hope the results will eventually be just as shocking.

Then, maybe we can all look back in 10 years and make Cassellius' prediction come true.

**Direct Link:** [http://www.postbulletin.com/opinion/our-view-focus-on-native-american-students-needed/article\\_356f5a72-c2d3-55b4-ad85-da1adc99c7ff.html](http://www.postbulletin.com/opinion/our-view-focus-on-native-american-students-needed/article_356f5a72-c2d3-55b4-ad85-da1adc99c7ff.html)

## The future of America's endangered languages

Matt Hansen



June 29, 2015

First came *Star Wars* in 2013. Then came *Finding Nemo* in 2014. Two box office successes, both having hit theaters years earlier, suddenly became subjects of media buzz all over again. *Star Wars* had a big premiere at a national festival, while *Finding Nemo* ended up back in the pages of *The Wall Street Journal* and *Time*.

Nothing had changed in the plot, the characters, or the images on screen. What was different was the language — in this case, the movies [had been dubbed into Navajo](#) by voice actors from around the Southwest. The brainchild of Manuelito Wheeler, who directs the Navajo Nation Museum in Arizona, the films did something that classroom lessons couldn't: They brought one of America's oldest languages into conversation with some of America's most popular films.

"This will be one historic event that will celebrate and recognize the fact that we're just part of society here...in this country," Wheeler [told public radio](#) in 2013 on the eve of the Navajo *Star Wars* premiere.

Navajo has some of the highest numbers of native speakers of any indigenous language in America, but it's far from the only Native American language still spoken in the country. Estimates point to [roughly 150 indigenous languages](#) spoken across the United States, from the robust — 18,000 speakers of Dakota in the Midwest, more than 100,000 speakers of Navajo across the Southwest — to the endangered — five speakers of the Chetco language in Oregon, for example.

In some cases, no fluent speakers still exist, like the Serrano language of California, whose last fluent native speaker is believed to have died in 2002.

Despite [the diversity of languages](#) spoken among native groups in nearly every state of the country today, actively used native languages have been on the decline since first contact with Europeans. Scholars estimate 300 languages may have been heard across the country before European arrival.

Now, some scholars have predicted that roughly 20 Native American languages will survive into 2050 — meaning more than 130 languages could cease being spoken in the coming decades.

For indigenous communities and researchers, the rush is on to stabilize and preserve as many of these rapidly fading languages as possible. And doing that requires understanding just how fragile many are.

"Compared to other languages that are spoken in the United States, most American Indian languages are truly endangered," said Norbert Francis of Northern Arizona University. "This means that the only remaining speakers are beyond childbearing age. If that's the case, their days are numbered. From that perspective, we want to preserve a record of those."

Francis is one of many scholars scrambling to capture languages on the brink — he runs [a YouTube channel](#) dedicated to native speakers of Nahuatl, a South American language descended from the Aztec.

And he says putting languages on the internet may be one way forward. He and other scholars have actively sought out native speakers to record, to capture traditional oral

storytelling that tells listeners something about both the language's structure and the speaker's culture.

"We use Facebook, YouTube, and other kinds of media because we can now," he said. "It preserves it and gets it out there so young people can hear it for the first time. Unless they have a grandfather at home who knows all the stories, they aren't even going to hear it."

And support for endangered languages is building even among former adversaries.

After decades of [neglect and forced schooling](#) at government-run boarding schools where native languages were banned, the federal government reversed course in 1990 and passed the Native American Languages Act, which emphasized the importance of preserving indigenous languages. That was followed by additional legislation in 2006 that provided funding for tribes interested in establishing language programs. On Native American reservations, many schools now offer bilingual education.

This combination of school programs and digital resources has started to stem the tide of some language loss, Francis said. And in the case of severely endangered languages, having any record at all could potentially lead to a renaissance some day in the future, he said.

"If they survive in some digital form, even if there are no more speakers left, that's something to be optimistic about," he said. "It will always be there. It's up to the community itself to decide what to do with the materials. If one day they want to resurrect it, that's possible."

One such example comes from the Miami tribe in Oklahoma, where a young tribe member named Daryl Baldwin grew up with no native speakers of the tribal language. By studying existing documentation and research, Baldwin [taught himself the language](#) and now runs a program dedicated to preserving it.

Linguist Leanne Hinton worked with Baldwin and said that his efforts underscore what makes a language stay alive.

"People using the language is the goal," she said. "If people can start using the language in their daily lives, then the kids around them are much more likely to become users themselves."

But there are hurdles that continue to face indigenous communities trying to keep a language in common use. For one, it can sometimes take several generations for adults in the tribe to become fluent again in their native language, and so there can be a lag time in teaching kids, she said.

And even tribes with well-established language programs, like the Navajo, still struggle to get kids to adopt the language when English becomes their primary language, Francis said.

"When a population gets bilingual, that's when it gets complicated," he said.

Yet both are impressed by the efforts of tribes of all sizes to preserve their language and the heritage that goes with it. And they say there are good examples to be had of languages coming back from the brink. Hebrew, Francis said, was largely a defunct oral language until the 1920s, when Jewish scholars resurrected it. The Hawaiian language now has generations of near-native speakers and is spoken both in and outside of school on the island chain, Hinton noted.

Francis believes all Americans should care about the indigenous languages that existed long before the United States existed. It's a matter of national heritage, he thinks.

"These were the first immigrants to the Americas," he said. "We have a responsibility to preserve these languages."

**Direct Link:** <http://theweek.com/articles/563549/future-americas-endangeredlanguages>

## **Houska: An Open Letter to Educators: Indian Mascots Harm Your Students**

[Tara Houska](#)

6/29/15

Dear Educator,

I write today to urge you and your colleagues to consider the negative effects Native-themed mascots have on Native and non-Native children alike.

In 2005, the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA) recommended the immediate retirement of all Native-themed mascots in educational institutions, athletic teams, etc. Their position was based on empirical evidence demonstrating the harmful impact Native mascots have on the self-esteem of Native American children.

Native American children are [2.5 times more likely](#) to commit suicide than any other race; it is the second leading cause of death from ages 15- to 34-years-old. To see the continued use of symbols and names known to harm our already at-risk children is particularly discouraging.

Native mascots also affect non-Native children. In March of this year, psychologists at the [University of Buffalo](#) conducted a study of predominantly white participants and determined that regardless of positive intent to honor Native Americans, mascots brought to mind negative thoughts and stereotypes associated with Native peoples. Further, they found that participants exposed to Native mascots were more likely to negatively stereotype other ethnic groups as well.

That is certainly not the kind of environment that creates a positive learning space for young minds. Our children's well-being should matter more than the legacy of a sports mascot. Native Americans have been fighting against appropriation of our images and mockery of our culture for decades, this is nothing new.

When I moved to Washington, D.C., I was shocked at the omnipresence of Washington football team imagery. I could not imagine being a Native child here; I remember feeling shame as a student when we made paper headaddresses for Thanksgiving and my classmates dressed up as Native for Halloween – this is a different level of indignity. Growing up hearing “Scalp the Redsk\*ns” at games and regularly seeing peers wearing a caricature of you on a jersey; our cultures aren't costumes. We're still here.

The fight against Native mascots is about more than ‘hurt feelings’. Here in D.C. I lobby and represent Native American tribes throughout the United States, and have first-hand experience with the impact of these images and names. Too often I speak with Congressional members and policymakers who have little to no knowledge of Native peoples, other than the caricatures they've seen at sporting events and on television. When you're not viewed as people, appropriation of funds for a hospital or a school becomes that much less likely.

I understand that some fans have a deep connection to a school's mascot and view it as a source of pride. But surely our dignity and equality as a still-existing group of people is worth making a change. The team will still be there, so will your school.

Native Americans have had to endure some of the worst treatment imaginable; at the time when many of these mascots and team names were selected, it was a criminal act for our peoples to practice the religious ceremonies being appropriated for entertainment value. Many students today learn nothing about Native Americans past Manifest Destiny or sports logos; “I thought you were extinct” is not an uncommon statement to hear. If there is such strong sentiment to honor us, it would be far more effective to [educate students](#) about contemporary Native Americans in addition to historical accounts.

I humbly ask that you make the right choice and stand on the right side of history. Native American advocacy has resulted in [2/3 of all Native mascots](#) being eliminated in the past 35 years. No professional sports teams have established a racial name or logo since 1963. Change will happen, and I am hopeful as a someday parent that my children will not have to experience the open caricature of their race in educational or professional settings. No matter the positive intent or if “some Natives are ok with it”, the negative effects are the same. Native Americans are living people with many diverse cultures, we aren't mascots.

Miigwech/Thank you.



Tara Houska. Photo courtesy Jason Daniels.

*Tara Houska (Couchiching First Nation) is a tribal rights attorney in Washington, D.C., a founding member of [NotYourMascots.org](http://NotYourMascots.org), and an all-around rabble rouser. Follow her on [@zhaabowekwe](https://twitter.com/zhaabowekwe).*

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/06/29/houska-open-letter-educators-indian-mascots-harm-your-students-160884>

## Valentino Resort 2016 Proves You Can Create A Native American Inspired Collection The Right, Respectful Way

[Jodie Layne](#)

3 hours ago



On the heels of March's Dsquared2 cultural appropriation debacle (where the brand was accused of debuting appropriative designs in a collection named after a slur towards Indigenous women), [Valentino Resort 2016](#) used its runway in Milan to show the *right* way to feature Native American-inspired designs. The design house teamed up with celebrated Metis artist Christi Belcourt to adapt one of her paintings into prints for

several of its Resort 2016 pieces. The results are not only absolutely, jaw-droppingly gorgeous, but respectful to the artist and her traditions.

Belcourt's work is featured in the National Gallery of Canada and perhaps her most powerful work is her embroidery of spats as part of the [Walking With Our Sisters](#) tribute to missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. Belcourt told *Native Max Magazine* that Valentino creative directors Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli reached out to her in a way that surprised and impressed her: "They contacted me. I don't know how they heard about my art. I appreciate the way they reach out to artists and really respect the integrity of their work."

Belcourt added that she was initially hesitant to participate in a collaboration with the brand because she's incredibly passionate about environmental rights (the piece of her art Valentino used was called *Water Song*) and wasn't sure of the company's track record. After research showed that Greenpeace had placed the brand atop its ranking list of major fashion houses' sustainability practices, she agreed.

Belcourt was involved in the process, indicating that there were no creative differences between her and the design house. She told *Native Max* that the pieces took months to create due to Valentino's commitment to perfectly matching the shades in her painting, which emulate traditional Metis beadwork using paint instead of beads. The results were visually stunning and impressed even the artist. "I absolutely love them all. But I really find the three long floor-length dresses to be works of art themselves," she told the publication.

The designs are gorgeous and seeing the way that Valentino conducted its business is almost just as astonishing. Instead of stealing from an Indigenous artist or clumsily and insultingly "[paying tribute](#)" to [Native American fashion](#) and design, Valentino partnered with and compensated an Indigenous artist while taking her designs to one of the most prestigious fashion events of the year. According to Dr. Adrienne K. of [Native Appropriations](#), this is exactly how things should be done:

"The bottom line is this: There should be no representations of us, without us. You want to draw upon Indigenous cultures for your line? Involve Indigenous artists and designers. There is no alternative answer. You love Bethany's Crow designs? Call Bethany. Collaborate with Bethany. Give her a chance to show at New York Fashion Week with you. The fashion world costs hella money to get a foot in the door, so if you as a designer truly want to offer a 'tribute' to Native people? Bring a Native designer up with you."

While summer brings about a scourge of "festival fashion" that tends to appropriate many different cultures, Valentino sets the bar seemingly high for brands and designers, but proves that being respectful is actually so simple: All you have to do is ask and give credit where credit is due. Is that really too much to expect?

**Direct Link:** <http://www.bustle.com/articles/93986-valentino-resort-2016-proves-you-can-create-a-native-american-inspired-collection-the-right-respectful-way>



# Native American tribe in California considers buying gun maker Colt

[Reuters](#)

[30 Jun 2015 at 14:10 ET](#)



Young woman pointing a gun (Shutterstock)

A Native American tribe in California is looking to make a bid for Colt Holding Co, the 179-year-old gun manufacturer, according to a tribal attorney.

“Colt is an iconic business and we’re sort of intensely interested in helping a business like that,” Drew Ryce, attorney for the Morongo Band of Mission Indians, told Reuters on Tuesday. “Colt is the Gun that Won the West. We are the West.”

The firearms manufacturer filed for bankruptcy on June 14 and is considering putting itself up for sale.

Ryce said the Banning, California-based tribe was looking to diversify its economy and an East Coast manufacturer would balance the tribe’s focus on retail, gambling and hospitality in Southern California.

A Colt spokesman declined to comment.

The manufacturer is controlled by Sciens Capital Management, a private equity firm that had proposed buying Colt in a sale that would not include any cash but would assume Colt’s obligations, other than \$250 million of bonds.

Ryce said the Morongo would qualify as a minority bidder in seeking government contracts, a big potential market for the gun maker, which would give Colt a leg up if it were owned by the tribe.

Colt's bondholders have blamed Sciens for draining the company of its cash and ignoring critical investment, which Sciens has denied.

"I don't understand what they were doing," Ryce said of the way Colt appears to have been run. "Once we look more closely, it will become clear."

Colt has said its lease on its West Hartford, Connecticut, facility may not be renewed in October, and Ryce said the tribe could relocate the operations.

"We're not looking to move it, but we wouldn't be put off by that," he said.

Ryce said tribal members have been raised to hunt and are far more likely than the general U.S. populace to enter the military, which has traditionally used Colt weapons like the M16 rifle.

"We've been raised with Colt side arms," said Ryce. "We know the products very well."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.rawstory.com/2015/06/native-american-tribe-in-california-considers-buying-gun-maker-colt/>

## **In wake of Lancaster mascot controversy, Newstead moves to establish Indigenous Peoples Day**

**In the wake of the Lancaster mascot controversy, Newstead's Town Board makes unanimous decision to establish Indigenous Peoples Day**



Rebecca Parker points to a relative in a photo inside the Tonawanda Indian Community House. Parker is a Seneca who supports Newstead's decision to designate the first Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples Day.

By [Barbara O'Brien](#) | News Staff Reporter |

on June 29, 2015 - 9:25 PM

, updated June 30, 2015 at 6:49 AM

Akron lacrosse players took a stand in March when they refused to play a game against the Lancaster Redskins because of their name, and now their hometown has made another statement.

The Newstead Town Board, consisting of two Conservatives, two Republicans and one Democrat, unanimously designated the second Monday of every October – otherwise known as Columbus Day – as Indigenous Peoples Day.

“The purpose is to celebrate and honor natives,” said Councilman Justin Rooney, a self-described Irish politician, who made the proposal several months ago. “I think the time has come to really look at Columbus Day.”

The small rural town in the northeast corner of Erie County, which includes a portion of the Tonawanda Indian Reservation, is the first in the area, and perhaps the state, to designate a day to recognize the contributions of Native Americans.

The decision was closely watched and appreciated by the Senecas who live there and nearby.

“It’s really important for our people,” said Rebecca Parker, a Native American, who was in Town Hall the night the Town Board made its decision.

The unanimous vote occurred on a warm Tuesday evening in May, about three hours after the Akron Tigers lacrosse team won the Section 6 championship on Grand Island. Many parents and players hurried back from the game to attend the Town Board meeting.

Parker’s son, Cole Reuben, was there, too, with some of his Tigers teammates to see history made inside the Newstead Town Hall.

“My kids will never know what it’s like to go through what we went through with Columbus Day,” he told his mother.

After the meeting, the Tonawanda Senecas formed a line in front of the board, each one shaking every board member’s hand in gratitude.

“It’s a great gesture. We’re very honored and humbled by it,” Parker said.

The Village of Akron, located in the town, followed not long after.

The local community joins Seattle and Minneapolis in designating Indigenous Peoples Day. South Dakota recognizes the second Monday in October as Native Americans Day, an official state holiday.

Rooney said the idea was to make Columbus Day, which is observed nationally, a little more “bearable” for Native Americans, who do not see it as a day of celebration. A committee, with members appointed by the town and Tonawanda Band of Senecas, is to be formed to figure out how to mark the day and to develop educational programs throughout the year. One thing that has been mentioned is changing the headdress on the Indian in the town seal from one with feathers running to the man’s knees to the traditional Seneca gustoweh, with a single feather standing up.

New York is one of 23 states that give employees the day off on Columbus Day, according to a report by the Pew Research Center. Although Rooney might want to, he said Newstead is not doing away with Columbus Day, which is a state holiday. But he would like Indigenous Peoples Day to spread to communities throughout the state.

“We didn’t make Columbus Day in Newstead. It came down from the federal government and state. It’s incumbent upon them to change that,” he said. “We did what we could at the local level.”

Native Americans are pleasantly surprised when they hear about it.

“I think it’s a really big step and a positive one,” said Chief Darwin Hill of the Tonawanda Band of Senecas.

“We really appreciate it,” said Parker, who directs the Tonawanda Band of Senecas department that cares for the sick and elderly. “We really bear the scars of all of our ancestors. It’s really a recognition of the trauma we’ve been through. There really was no American dream for us.”

Natives and non-natives in the community have known each other for years and generally get along.

“We’ve developed a good relationship. We know them, and they know us,” said Hill, who has spoken before the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. “It’s been good, and this is almost like the topping on the cake.”

## **Reception of the news**

While Native Americans are pleased with the designation, some white residents don’t know what to make of it. Many had not heard about it, and details are slim on what might happen on the day. No one said anything negative in interviews with The Buffalo News, but they did not want to go on the record with their comments, either, and shop owners did not want to offend any of their customers.

Many, native and non-native, have no trouble remembering the rhyme from school that in 1492 Italian explorer Christopher Columbus “sailed the ocean blue,” but he is not universally revered. Columbus is credited – and blamed – for opening up the Americas for European colonization while trying to find an alternate route to Asia.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed Columbus Day a national holiday in 1937, but it was Buffalonian Mariano A. Lucca, a crusader for Columbus, who is credited with Columbus Day being designated as an official Monday federal holiday in 1971.

Today the Federation of Italian-American Societies in Western New York promotes the contributions of Italians and Italian-American heritage with the annual Columbus Day parade in Buffalo and other activities.

Peter LoJacono, president of the federation, said the groups celebrate Columbus for his courage, intelligence and great navigational skills in making several trips to Central America, which was new to Europeans. They had not heard of the Newstead action, but he said they embrace all cultures, and welcome others recognizing their own cultures.

“We encourage all people to celebrate their heritage as they see fit,” LoJacono said.

Columbus Day not only recognizes Christopher Columbus, but the contributions of all Italians and Italian-Americans.

“This, for us, will always be Columbus Day,” LoJacono said. “It’s a day we have always celebrated. We will continue to do so.”

But Native Americans see little to celebrate about Columbus, who they blame for enslaving and killing native people.

“Your heroes are not our heroes,” said Seneca Al Parker, a historian who spoke for the Council of Chiefs on the Lancaster mascot issue. “As indigenous people, why would we recognize a person of his stature? ... Acknowledging the native people versus what he did is much more significant.”

Newstead, a rural town of 8,600, was founded in 1823, while the Senecas were one of the original members of the Iroquois Confederacy. The band was recognized by the federal government as a separate tribe from the Seneca Nation of Indians in 1857. Hill said about 1,000 live on the reservation today.

The designation of Indigenous People’s Day is not the first collaboration between the government and the Senecas.

The Tonawanda Indian Community House just outside town, which provides space for a clinic, senior lunch program, recreation and meeting rooms, was built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s on land in the Genesee County Town of Alabama purchased by American Indians. Filled with native items and memorabilia, it is maintained by the state Office of Children and Family Services.

A large photo on the wall shows nearly two dozen Seneca artisans who worked on the building, including relatives of those who live in the reservation.

## **Athletes take a stand**

The connection between many native and non-natives is made in Akron Central Schools, where about 11 percent of the 1,500 students are Native American. The district stood behind its varsity boys lacrosse team this spring when the team boycotted a nonleague game with Lancaster to protest the use of the now-retired Redskins mascot.

The majority of the members of the lacrosse squad, which was the top-scoring high school team in the country this year, are Native American. Many credit them with helping to bring the mascot issue to a head in Lancaster, which had planned to have a months-long community discussion about changing its mascot.

After Akron canceled its lacrosse game with Lancaster, Niagara Wheatfield and Lake Shore Central lacrosse teams, which also have a number of Native American students, did the same.

Ten days later, the Redskins name was retired in Lancaster.

“They took a stand on it and they acted on it,” Parker said. “Akron was the catalyst to create this chain reaction. They had enough.”

“We responded to what was going on in Lancaster,” Superintendent Kevin Shanley said. “We just acted on what we thought was right for our district.”

The School Board also plans to discuss the town’s designation of Indigenous Peoples Day next month, he said.

## **Shifting perceptions**

“I think it’s a good idea to move away from the glorification of Columbus,” said Kristin Groff, human resources manager for the Wolves Den smoke shop on the reservation.

She said she remembers learning in school that Columbus discovered America, but not the negatives that came from contact with him and Europeans.

“They left out the slavery, rape and pillage,” added her brother, Vincent Groff.

On Oct. 12, the first observance of Indigenous Peoples Day, Rooney will have just a few months more to serve as councilman. He said he is leaving office at the end of the year, and wanted to establish Indigenous People Day before he goes. He said he considers himself Irish, although his great-grandparents were Native American. But he said his ancestry had nothing to do with his efforts today.

“You look at me, I’m an Irish guy and I’ve got dark eyes. The situation was I wanted to do something that was right,” Rooney said. “We’re still trying to honor a guy who didn’t

discover this country. There's so many other Italian-Americans that could be celebrated for doing great things."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/akron-newstead/in-wake-of-lancaster-mascot-controversy-newstead-moves-to-establish-indigenous-peoples-day-20150629>

## Meet the Native American Rachel Dolezal

06.30.158:55 PM ET

Andrea Smith is a Native American activist and academic hailed for her Cherokee heritage. One small problem: She's not Cherokee.

Andrea Smith—an associate professor at University of California, Riverside, the founder of [INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence](#), and a leading Native American studies scholar and activist—may not, in fact, be a Cherokee woman, despite repeatedly presenting herself as such since at least 1991.

I first saw Andrea Smith in 2013 when she delivered a keynote at the Southeastern Women's Studies Association (SEWSA) conference and, although her [program bio](#) did not explicitly mention that she was Cherokee, she was widely understood by conference goers to be a Native American speaker.

After all, she was the author of [Conquest](#), a landmark text about state-sanctioned acts of violence against Native American women, she had been [involved](#) with the Chicago chapter of the organization Women of All Red Nations ([WARN](#)), and when she was denied tenure by the University of Michigan, students and faculty [rallied](#) around her, suggesting discrimination on the basis of her Native American descent.

She had a long history of speaking as a Native American woman on issues affecting Native Americans. Her tenure controversy, in particular, was legendary in academic circles. At the time, [Inside Higher Ed](#) referred to her as "[a] Cherokee," adding that "she is among a very small group of Native American scholars who have won positions at top research universities."

But that's not so, as David Cornsilk—a research analyst who did genealogical work for the Cherokee Nation in the late 1980s and has operated his own practice, Cherokee Genealogy Services, since 1990—can attest. He confirmed to The Daily Beast that Smith reached out to him twice during the 1990s to research her own genealogy. There was no evidence of Cherokee heritage either time.

"Her ancestry through her mother was first and showed no connection to the Cherokee tribe," Cornsilk told The Daily Beast. "Her second effort came in 1998 or around then with 'new claims' on her father's lineage, which also did not pan out."



At first, Cornsilk thought that she was “just another client, nothing out of the ordinary.” But when she came back the second time, Cornsilk told The Daily Beast, Smith “told [him] her employment depended on finding proof of Indian heritage.”

Smith allegedly continued to portray herself as Cherokee despite Cornsilk’s research. Her second attempt to establish her Cherokee descent came shortly before she established the renowned feminist of color activist organization [INCITE!](#) and about five years before her 2002 appointment as an assistant professor at the University of Michigan.

Cornsilk told The Daily Beast that he was “compelled to inform members of her field that she had no Cherokee ancestry.”

Smith and I interacted on Twitter during SEWSA but we can’t anymore. As WordPress blogger [tequilasovereign](#) discovered, Smith deactivated her Twitter account shortly after Annita Lucchesi, a graduate student at Washington State University, posted a now-viral Tumblr post entitled “[Andrea Smith is not Cherokee](#).”

“Andrea Smith is not Cherokee. omg. [T]his is not new information,” Lucchesi wrote.

Although Smith’s deception may have been something of an open secret among groups of Native American scholars and activists, the news comes as a shock to a broader academic community that has long hailed her as a Cherokee voice.

“Andrea Smith does not rep being Cherokee unless you ask her, she usually introduces herself as a ‘woman of color or Native.’ [S]he has no ties to any Cherokee community, no record of her ancestry, and no known family that identifies as Cherokee or acknowledges Cherokee ancestry,” Lucchesi added.



For the past week, an [anonymous Tumblr](#) has been posting evidence of Smith’s portrayal of herself as Cherokee alongside evidence debunking these claims. The emerging narrative is eerily similar to the case of [Rachel Dolezal](#), the former NAACP chapter president who portrayed herself as black for 10 years before being revealed to be white by her parents.

In 1991, Smith wrote an article for *Ms. Magazine* entitled “For All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life,” ([PDF](#)) in which she chastises white feminists who want to appropriate aspects of Native American culture without experiencing any of the oppression:

“When white ‘feminists’ see how white people have historically oppressed others and how they are coming very close to destroying the earth, they often want to disassociate themselves from their whiteness. They do this by opting to ‘become Indian.’ ... Of course, white ‘feminists’ want to become only partly Indian. They do not want to be a part of our struggles for survival against genocide...”

Her bio below the article refers to her as “a Cherokee woman” and “cofounder of Women of All Red Nations (WARN).” At the time, Smith, who was born in San Francisco, may not have had any proof of Native American descent. In other words, she may have been a white feminist trying to “become” Native American herself—a level of hypocrisy that recalls Dolezal’s own criticisms of cultural appropriation.

By the time Smith was denied tenure in 2008, she was serving as the director of Native American Studies at the University of Michigan. When students and faculty portrayed the denial as discrimination against a Native American faculty member, at least one Cherokee critic who was aware of Smith’s background decided to speak out.

Long before Rachel Dolezal was accused of “[ethnic fraud](#),” Steve Russell, a columnist for *Indian Country Today Media Network*, called Smith an “[ethnic fraud](#)” for portraying herself as Cherokee in the buildup to the UMich incident:

“I am Cherokee, and Smith has in the past claimed that same tribal affiliation. Her e-mail handle, I have learned, is ‘Tsalagi’ [meaning Cherokee]. In my last column, I mentioned her 15 refereed articles, two books written, book chapters written and books edited. These are the currency of academia: what you have done rather than what you are born.”

In the column, Russell describes the damage Smith causes by allowing the university and the public to perceive her as Native American.

“If the University of Michigan wants a researcher and teacher, it would appear by objective criteria they have one. If they want a Cherokee, not,” he wrote. “Ethnic fraud is harmful to tribes and sometimes to individual real Indians if they are passed over for a fake in a job that really does call for a tribal person.”

The piece was not widely read, however, and academic bios for Smith continued to refer to her as “[a Cherokee woman](#)” until as recently as December 2014. In the meantime, Smith took a position at University of California, Riverside. And although accusations of ethnic fraud continued, they appear to have flown under the radar until Lucchesi’s post.

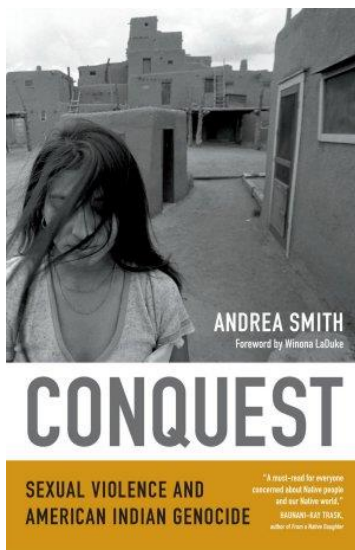
In 2013, Mark Edwin Miller’s book [Claiming Tribal Identity: The Five Tribes and the Politics of Federal Acknowledgment](#) described an alleged confrontation between Smith

and Cherokee scholars Patti Jo King and Richard Allen that occurred midway through her career. According to Miller, Smith agreed to stop claiming Cherokee descent after they “confronted her” in a private meeting. Judging from the [long list of bios](#) in the 2010s in which she is referred to as “Cherokee” or “aboriginal,” Smith did not respect King and Allen’s wishes.

At a conference in 2011, for example, Smith was introduced as “an anti-violence activist from the Cherokee nation” and speaks using the collective pronoun “we” when referring to indigenous people:

As for why Smith might have claimed to be Cherokee, David Cornsilk has his suspicions. He said that it’s “not unusual” for people to contact him on the basis that their employment depends on proving their descent.

“I just did a research project for a client [who] had some silly notion that by being certified he could do more for Indians than we could for ourselves,” Cornsilk told The Daily Beast. “It’s that kind of paternalistic arrogance that made me shut down my business for a few years.”



‘Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide’ by Andrea Smith. 264 p. Duke University Press Books. \$17.97. (Amazon)

Like Rachel Dolezal and her work with the NAACP, Smith has a long history of advocating for and speaking on behalf of Native American women. But like Dolezal, her refusal to clarify her own background raises important and troubling questions about her role in that very work.

Andrea Smith could not be reached for comment. When asked for comment on Smith, INCITE! told The Daily Beast: “We support Andy Smith and the self-determination of all First Nations People. INCITE would rather place our collective resources into abolishing settler colonialism than in perpetuating this ideology by policing her racial and tribal identity.”

**Update:** Patti Jo King, a Cherokee historian, journalist and Interim Chair of American Indian Studies at Bacone College, confirmed to The Daily Beast via e-mail that she and her colleague Richard Allen confronted Andrea Smith about her claims of Cherokee descent at a conference in 2007. King wrote that Smith “admitted” to her and Allen that “she wasn’t sure about her connection to the Cherokee family,” that she “apologized profusely for making untrue statements as well as statements she said she was not sure about,” and that she “promised to set the record straight and never again claim to be Cherokee.” “She has allowed publishers, professors, conference organizers, publicists, and her many readers to continue to propagate the notion that she is indeed Cherokee, and by extension, speaks on our behalf,” King said.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/30/meet-the-native-american-rachel-dolezal.html>

## Person puts fake Native American head on Jacksonville statue

1:26 p.m. Wednesday, July 1, 2015 | Filed in: [News](#)

A person placed a fake Native American head on a statue of Andrew Jackson Monday night in downtown Jacksonville, [WJAX](#) reports.

The head “appears life-sized and was placed in Jackson’s lap about 15 to 20 feet up,” WJAX reports. The person had to get through a chain-linked fence and either use a ladder or climb to reach the statue.



Andrew Jackson statue

The statue is located in front of the Jacksonville Landing and represents the city’s history -- Jacksonville is named for the seventh president. It is believed whoever placed the fake head on the statue did it out of protest.

Some locals think the statue “represents an ugly chapter in American history,” WJAX reports. During his presidency, Jackson enacted the Indian Removal Act, which relocated and killed thousands of Native Americans.

“I think that there’s too much racial tension going on in today’s day and age and seeing something like that right in my backyard where I run every day is completely ridiculous,” said resident Jamie Johnson to WJAX.

The fake head was removed by a crane on Tuesday morning. “The city has no idea who would do this or why,” WJAX reports.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/news/person-puts-fake-native-american-head-jacksonville/nmp69/>

## **The Atrocity Propaganda Ben Franklin Circulated to Sway Public Opinion in America’s Favor**

By [Rebecca Onion](#)

*The Vault is Slate's history blog. Like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on Twitter [@slatevault](#), and find us on [Tumblr](#). Find out more about what this space is all about [here](#).*

Benjamin Franklin wrote and published this hoax, "Supplement to the Boston Independent Chronicle," in 1782, hoping that it would end up in the hands of British newspaper editors who might reprint articles from its pages. Through these manufactured tales of atrocities perpetrated by Native Americans at the behest of the British, Franklin looked to influence the mindset of the British public as he worked on negotiating the peace treaty that would formally end the conflict between Britain and the new United States.

Franklin penned the letter that takes up three-quarters of the page below using a set of narrative framing devices. Most of the text is written in the voice of a "British agent," James Craufurd, who addresses the governor of Canada, presenting him a shipment of colonists' scalps taken by "Senneka Indians" loyal to the crown. Franklin embedded this letter within another, from [Samuel Gerrish](#), a captain in the New England militia. The fictional voice of "Gerrish" presents the Craufurd letter, purporting to have captured it along with other British military goods.

The description of the scalps includes gruesome and colorful details about the manner in which farmers, mothers, boys, and girls were killed: "102 [scalps] of Farmers...; only 18 marked with a little yellow Flame, to denote their being Prisoners burnt alive, after being scalped, their Nails pulled out by the Roots and other Torments..."

Both colonists and their British opponents had enlisted the help of local Native American tribes in the conflict. Yet, literary historian Carla Mulford [writes](#), "Franklin had probably become aware during his years of diplomacy that the general population in England and Europe was relatively unaware of this situation." In the Supplement, Franklin exploited this lack of awareness by ratcheting up the level of drama. Since Franklin was looking to secure reparations for colonists who had suffered Iroquois attacks, the atrocities reported in such vivid color in the letter would, he hoped, sway British readers to support that objective.

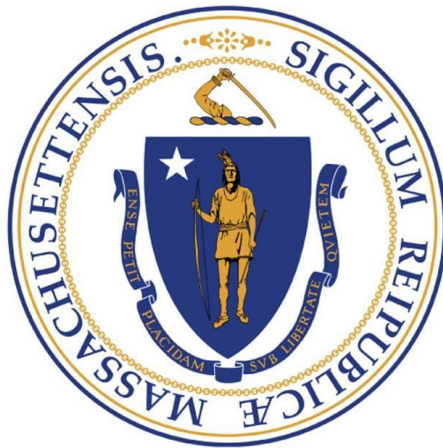
Mulford found evidence that the scalping letter was reprinted a few times in London, and many more in the new United States. Thirty-five American newspapers republished Franklin's handiwork as truth before 1854, when the Trenton, New Jersey, *State Gazette* outed it as a hoax.

*You can see the two other pages in Franklin's Supplement, including a letter supposedly from John Paul Jones protesting the treatment of American prisoners of war, reproduced in [Mulford's essay](#). I first read about this hoax [on the website of the Journal of the American Revolution](#).*

**Direct Link:**

[http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_vault/2015/07/01/history\\_of\\_benjamin\\_franklin\\_diplomacy\\_propaganda\\_newspaper\\_with\\_stories.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_vault/2015/07/01/history_of_benjamin_franklin_diplomacy_propaganda_newspaper_with_stories.html)

## **It's no Confederate flag, but our banner is still pretty awful**



The Massachusetts state seal, which displays the same image as the flag.

By [Yvonne Abraham](#) Globe Columnist June 25, 2015

It took the slaughter of nine innocents, but finally, in South Carolina and elsewhere in Dixie, the Confederate flag is being treated as the throwback racist banner it is.

But while we're on the subject of offensive flags, perhaps we should take a few minutes to contemplate our own.

Though the Massachusetts state flag is not as overtly abhorrent as the one that flies on South Carolina's state capital grounds, it is still pretty awful.

Take a good look.

What exactly is going on here? There's the blue shield on the white field. And a white five-point star, signifying Massachusetts' status as one of the first states. So far, pretty standard stuff.

Then it gets weird. On the shield stands a Native American drawn in gold, a bow in one hand, an arrow in the other — its point turned down to signify peacefulness. Or is it surrender?

But wait — what is that right above his head? Why, it's a disembodied, muscular arm, brandishing a broadsword. And beneath the whole bizarre tableau is a Latin motto which translates to: "By the sword we seek peace, but peace under liberty." It's a slightly more genteel version of New Hampshire's pugilistic "Live free or die."

It is hard to read it all together as anything but a flag designed by and for the colonial conquerors who made the Bay State, the ones who won the land — with a short time out for Thanksgiving dinner — by all but eradicating the people who got here first.

Or at least it is hard to read it any other way if you are one of the descendants of those who knew the upraised sword, and then the bitter peace.

Native Americans have been trying to change the flag for decades, to little effect.

Now is the time.

"It depicts oppression," said John Peters Jr., executive director of the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs. "To have the sword over our head . . . it signifies a policy that has affected all tribes."

The motto and the sword purportedly refer not to the victory over the native peoples but to the pilgrims' attitude toward their imperial oppressors in England. Vexillologists (the fancy word for flag scholars) and heraldry nerds will tell you the sword is related to the motto, not to the man on the shield. But that nuance long ago drained from the image, which also appears on the state seal.



## The state flag

The flag has a blue shield on the white field, and a white five-point star, signifying Massachusetts' status as one of the first states

### The Arm

A holdover from the seal created in 1775 which showed an English-American man holding the Magna Carta while brandishing a sword



### The Motto

The Latin motto translates to "By the sword we seek peace, but peace under liberty"

### The Figure

From the Algonquin tribe holds an arrow pointed down in a gesture of peace



### "Come over and help us"

The flag is based on the seal received by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629. That seal depicted a Native American, from whose mouth came the motto: "Come over and help us."

SOURCES: The Flag book of the United States, Whitney Smith; Flags of the Fifty States, Randy Howe

GLOBE STAFF

Peters, a Mashpee Wampanoag, sees in the flag “an attitude of, ‘we are going to liberate your assets, your property, and we will do it peacefully but if necessary by the sword.’ ”

The flag is based on the seal received by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629. That seal depicted a Native American between two pine trees. From his mouth came the motto: “Come over and help us.”

Yes, the Native Americans were just crying out to be conquered and converted.

At the time of colonization 30,000 of them called Massachusetts home. By the end of the 17th century, fully 99 percent of them had been killed by the diseases and warfare the settlers brought with them. These were ugly years, bringing the devastating King Philip’s War, and the internment even of those Native Americans who had converted to Christianity, many of whom died of starvation and exposure while imprisoned on the Boston Harbor Islands.

It is that ugly history Native Americans see when they look at the Massachusetts flag.

Over the years, controversy has flared up over the state’s official images, then died down. Native Americans had bigger things to worry about — like poverty and health challenges — not to mention more current cultural irritants, like insulting team names and stupid mascots.

The flag is “ugly and offensive,” said writer and activist Paula Peters, a cousin of John. “But we don’t have time every day to go over all of the insipid, insensitive, stupid things that happen. There are too many battles, and too few of us to fight them.”

Whenever those offended by the flag have been ready to fight, state Representative Byron Rushing has pushed for legislators to revisit the flag.

“There is not so much a feeling that people want to defend it, but just a reluctance among my colleagues to change it,” said the Roxbury Democrat, who took the offensive seal off his own stationery decades ago.

Rushing has long expected a group of schoolchildren to lead the charge. After all, a class from Western Massachusetts was key to getting the Mass. Pike logo changed in the late 1980s. After they brought the offensiveness of the arrow piercing the pilgrim’s hat to his attention, Rushing pushed the authority to replace it with the much friendlier and less insulting hat-by-itself.

It’s time for the kids to step up again. Or for the grown-ups on Beacon Hill and beyond to take this on.

Clearly, our state flag is not in the same league as the Confederate standard, the banner carried by those who fought to keep black people as slaves.

The Massachusetts state flag is more in the camp of the blindingly archaic. History has not been kind to it, each decade making it seem yet more insensitive.

This state was born and has thrived in part because of Native Americans' massive losses. Our flag ought to reflect the huge debt we owe them. And a larger sense of who we are and want to be.

*Globe columnist Yvonne Abraham can be reached at yvonne.[abraham@globe.com](mailto:abraham@globe.com)  
[Follow her on Twitter @GlobeAbraham](#)*

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/06/24/abraham/EqlC3F8W9tPGsjP4NkWE2N/story.html>

## **Blackhorse: 'Native American' or 'American Indian'? 5 More Native Voices Respond**

[Amanda Blackhorse](#)

7/2/15

Recently I submitted an article of interviews with six prominent Native people throughout the nation on the subject of naming. This created much discussion throughout Indian country, so I've decided to keep the conversation going.

The question asked: "What do you prefer to be called? Native American, Native, American Indian, Indian, etc.?" References of us are important and this discussion differs throughout Native communities.

We know there is not one simple or singular answer. What we can all agree upon is to reject pejorative references to Native people (e.g. "redskins," "squaw," "savages," etc.).

I want to reiterate, this discussion does not argue that Indian is better or indigenous is better, vice versa, or to invalidate being an American or not to be; it is about what we choose as well as how and why we used these names. So, here we go again, the people speak and we shall listen:

**1. Courtney Tsotigh-Yarholar: I refer to myself as Kiowa.**



Courtney Tsotigh-Yarholar.

Courtney Tsotigh-Yarholar is a proud Kiowa, a mother of two, and a wife to the Cortney Yarholar original. She is a higher education professional, currently working at the University of Central Oklahoma in Career Services. She is dedicated to supporting students to reach their educational, leadership and career goals. Courtney is one of four plaintiffs in the case against the Washington football team that stripped six of its seven trademarks in 2014. Courtney and the four plaintiffs, myself included, are currently being sued by pro-football.

When asked how she refers to herself, Tsotigh-Yarholar said, “I’ve been asked this question many times, dating back to grade school. The question is usually posed as, ‘do you prefer to X,Y, Z?’ To which I am expected to choose from one and categorize who I am, further marginalizing myself, and possibly someone else. It’s always difficult to answer this question because ‘I’ do not necessarily identify with any of these terms. I refer to myself as Kiowa. Depending on the setting it may be appropriate to refer more broadly to the term of ‘American Indians,’ but it is also important for non-Natives to refer to me by my tribe rather than one of the umbrella terms because it is respectful and accurate. By doing this, it demonstrates a learning and understanding of who I am. ‘Indian country’ isn’t one umbrella term; it is made up of many tribes. While Indian people may share some cultural similarities, each tribe is very distinctive. If this mind-set were adopted, it would serve as a pivotal shift in our country and how we view Indian country.”

## **2. Frank Waln: I like to refer to myself as Sicangu Lakota.**



Frank Waln. Photo courtesy Matika Wilbur.

Frank Waln is Sicangu Lakota, an award winning hip-hop artist, producer, and performer from the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. He is recipient of the Gates Millennium Scholarship and attended Columbia College Chicago where he received a B.A. in Audio Arts and Acoustics. He has been featured on BuzzFeed’s 12 Native Americans Who Are Making a Difference, USA Today, ESPN, and MTV’s Rebel Music Native America.

Waln has written for various publications, including *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* and *The Guardian*.

When asked how he refers to himself, Waln stated, “If you ask 10 different people you will get 10 different answers. I preface that and say, ‘My answers do not speak for everyone, I speak for myself.’ In what I believe in how I was raised, I like to refer to myself as Sicangu Lakota.”

Waln said the meaning and origin of the term Sicangu is “burnt thighs” or the “burnt thigh nation.” He says that is what his ancestors called themselves, well before colonial contact. “Our people had to run through the fire to survive, so a lot of us burnt their thighs,” he said. “By me saying that name [Sicangu], it reminds me of where I come from. I come from strong people, who survived crazy circumstances. We ran through fire to live. That’s in my blood. In my D.N.A.”

Waln then talks about the decolonization of his identity: “For most of my life, I didn’t understand I was attached to this amazing ancestry. That I came from such strong people because a lot of what media tells us is, as Native people, we are dumb, cheap, less than, we’re savages, we’re alcoholics, and I internalized that as a kid because that is the environment I grew up in. When I speak to Native kids now, I remind them that they come from greatness. Greatness is inside all of us. That myth that Natives are dumb, primitive, savages, even shy, it’s all a lie! I call myself Sicangu Lakota because to me that name is strong, that name is old; it predates the United States.”

Waln also said he feels the term ‘indigenous’ is an acceptable blanket statement of our people. He deters from terms such as ‘Sioux’ or ‘Indian,’ but knows others who use these terms. “I feel every Native should have the choice. Those conversations we need to have within ourselves, and it’s not for the outside to know everything about us or be involved in those types of conversations. Because those are for us.”

### **3. Kiarra Spottsville: We aren’t Indian.**



Kiarra Spottsville. Photo courtesy Roshan Spottsville.

Kiarra Spottsville is Diné (Navajo) and African-American. Her maternal family is from Balookai, Arizona on the Navajo Nation, and her paternal family is from Alexandria,

Louisiana. She is the Public Relations Officer for the Morning Star Leaders Youth Council, an organization based out of Phoenix, Arizona that connects Native youth with their cultures. She is also a high school sophomore and is also class secretary.

When asked how she refers to herself, Spottsville says it depends on the audience. When she introduces herself to other Natives she will introduce herself in her Diné clans first, and then say she is of the Navajo tribe. She says that when she is talking to non-Natives she does not say her clans, but she will say she is Native American and then say she is Navajo. If she is speaking at a public event she will first introduce herself with her clans and then her name, then her tribe.

She also says that when she tells others, Native and non-Native, that she is “Native American,” they look confused. Then she will say she is “Native American and Black,” then she will get a nod. Spottsville said that whenever she says “Indian” people usually think she is from India. This brought us to the discussion about the terms ‘Native American’ and ‘American Indian.’ She is mostly comfortable with them except for “Indian.” She feels most non-Natives don’t understand it’s not a socially acceptable term any longer. She says, “We aren’t Indian. When other people [non-Natives] say ‘Indian’ it’s because they don’t know any better. And sometimes it comes out of ignorance.” She states that when she hears non-Natives use the term “Indian” it reminds her of how people use the term “redskin” out of ignorance. “Some people just don’t know the history of the name and they think it is just the name of a football team.” She states that non-Natives should refer to us as Native American or indigenous.”

Spottsville says naming is important to her because when people take more care in how they reference certain ethnic groups it shows they care and shows they are knowledgeable of other cultures. “It is out of respect to call us how we want to be called,” she said. “When people are more mindful of their references they are more willing to learn.”

#### **4. Dyani White Hawk: Understanding our names is a base level of understanding of who we are.**



Dyani White Hawk. Photo courtesy Daniel Polk.

Dyani White Hawk, from Shakopee, Minnesota, is Sicangu Lakota and an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. White Hawk graduated with a M.F.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a B.F.A. from the Institute of American Indian Arts. She is an award-winning artist widely exhibited throughout Indian country with exhibitions in Italy and Russia. Former Gallery Director and Curator of the All My Relations Gallery in Minneapolis, White Hawk recently transitioned into a full-time studio practice.

White Hawk identifies herself first and foremost by her tribe, Sicangu Lakota. When she identifies as this, most non-Natives respond with a look of confusion. She believes it's because they don't understand the term 'Sicangu.' When she gets this reaction she will explain, "I'm a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe in South Dakota." Then they will nod. When she identifies herself to other Natives as Sicangu Lakota, it is understood. In either scenario, sometimes confusion comes from her appearance instead of terminology; she will then say, "My dad is German and Welsh" and she gets a nod. White Hawk says she identifies more with her Lakota side since it was her mother who primarily raised her.

When asked how she refers to Natives as a whole, White Hawk explains: "I always say

'Native,' and I do that as a conscious choice because we are Native to this land before it was the U.S. The name 'American' is a construct of our current state. We're also Americans, but our indigeneity pre-dates that. I don't take offense to the term 'Native American.' If the audience is primarily from the U.S., then the context is understood and I just use 'Native.' If we are talking to a global audience, I say 'Native American.'"

White Hawk says this about the term American Indian: "I never use the term American Indian by speech, but maybe in writing. In the written word, American Indian is still used in many ways. In government and academic circles we're still American Indian," she said, then named notable national organizations and academia. White Hawk says this about the term 'Indian': "If we're in a causal setting with family and friends we say Indian all the time. We use it casually because in that situation it's just us and we're not making a political statement. We have to also remember and respect that it was the common term one generation ago."

White Hawk says naming is important because, "Understanding our names is a base level of understanding of who we are. It's not about political correctness. P.C. has a bad wrap. It's about having knowledge of the term you are using. How people use these terms shows their competency. We aren't just people crying around about the past; the effects of the past are still very real and it didn't just happen to our grandparents. When people don't respect your request to be identified by your name, by your own definition, it's hurtful and de-validating."

**5. Willow Abrahamson: I prefer 'indigenous,' but I am comfortable with 'Native American' or 'American Indian'.**





Willow Abrahamson. Photo courtesy Zoey Harley.

Willow is from Salmon, Idaho, the traditional homeland of the Lemhi Shoshone "Aqai-dika" people. She is the last Lemhi Shoshone to be born there. On her mother's side, she is a proud descendent of chiefs of the Lemhi and Boise Shoshones, as well as the famed Shoshone woman Sacajawea. On her father's side, her Interior Salish ancestry extends throughout the Northwest and Southern Canada. Willow is also a part of the pow wow circle and currently resides on a ranch on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. Willow is a mother, jingle dress dancer, sun dancer, as well as an intermittent artistic model. She is also a Master's level social worker.

When asked how she refers to herself, Abrahamson said: "I am an indigenous woman representing numerous bloodlines, which I proudly carry from my paternal and maternal sides. Much like many matrilineal tribes, I carry the relation to the mother's side as first clan (Agai-dika and Bahnite'h). Bahnite'h means I am Bannock (Boise Valley Bannock). Therefore, I identify as a Lemhi Shoshone and Bannock as my first and primary tribe, which is also my son's first and primary tribes. Second, I come from bloodlines of the Colville Tribes (Wenatchee and San Poil Bands), Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and Spokane Tribe of the great northwest on my father's side."

When asked which references she feels most comfortable with she says, "I prefer indigenous, but I am comfortable with 'Native American' or 'American Indian'. The reason I prefer indigenous is because being indigenous means you are of a place, one place on earth, which is unique to you. It identifies our peoples well because we referred to ourselves as from a place or location."

She also says naming is important to her because, she said, "I acknowledge and represent all of the nations and will keep my children and next generations updated. I am sure that in this day and age, knowing your bloodlines is very important, given that any marriage

or union of, or formation of, a family with any one of these nations will affect your future generation's identity. My future generations have to have a strong identity and knowledge of their unique identity because it is the way we are known to [the] creator. It directly affects our well being and relationship with [the] creator. It affects how we pray or interact during specific times or events.”



Amanda Blackhorse. Photo courtesy Malcolm Benally.

*Amanda Blackhorse, Diné, is a mother and activist. She and four other plaintiffs won a case against the Washington football team that stripped it of six of its seven trademarks. Follow her on Twitter [@blackhorse\\_a](https://twitter.com/blackhorse_a). She lives in Phoenix, Arizona.*

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/07/02/blackhorse-native-american-or-american-indian-5-more-native-voices-respond-160935>

## Indians Lose Again — No Second Chances For CT Tribes

**[Kevin Rennie](#)**

Hartford Courant [KFRennie@yahoo.com](mailto:KFRennie@yahoo.com)



The federal Bureau of Indian Affairs rejected the request for federal recognition of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation, located in Kent, in 2005.

(Richard Messina / Hartford Courant)

Do Eastern Pequots, Golden Hill Paugussetts and Schaghticokes deserve a second chance?

That didn't last long. On Friday, June 26, the Supreme Court issued a historic ruling that all states of the nation shall permit same-sex marriage. Gov. Dannel P. Malloy declared in a written statement Friday morning, the decision "reaffirms everything that this nation stands for — equality, liberty and justice for all."

Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman wrote, "Today's victory furthers us as a nation, one that is committed to all our citizens."

"The arc of the moral universe is long but bends toward justice," said Martin Luther King, Jr. in a piece of hopeful wisdom that has sustained millions. That arc became a sharp scythe on Monday for aspiring Native American tribes in Connecticut. Even by Malloy's standards, the turnabout was harsh.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs released revised regulations Monday that will make it harder for American Indians to win tribal approval. Malloy was particularly delighted because the proposed regulations "ensure that previously denied tribal groups in Connecticut will not get another bite at the apple" of recognition.

"Another bite at the apple" means a second chance. Native Americans seeking recognition of their tribes will not get a second chance to make their case. Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Christopher Murphy joined fellow Connecticut Democrat Malloy, stating, "Most notably, the BIA has reversed course on its initial plan to allow a second bite at the apple for previously denied petitioners."

The press release from the triumphant trio came with everything but whoops of satisfaction at vanquishing Native Americans. They are so proud of themselves. They showed those Eastern Pequots, Golden Hill Paugussetts and Schaghticokes. They have no need to fall under the protection of "everything this nation stands for."

Plenty of people, including the persistent men and women who won at the Supreme Court on Friday, have been rebuffed, gathered themselves and tried again. And again and again. Connecticut's Native American tribes, however, must live under different rules. Rules that Malloy, Blumenthal and Murphy delight in.

Wait, there's more. Monday was an eventful day in Connecticut. Later in the day, Malloy hailed the General Assembly's approval of his second chance proposal for convicted criminals. The new law, according to Malloy, is "focused on turning nonviolent offenders into productive members of our society." Wyman said the legislation improves "how we prepare and reintegrate ex-offenders into housing, employment and services."

Connecticut law has long provided many chances for criminal defendants to avoid convictions and incarceration. What Monday revealed was that Malloy will lavish the

highest praise on giving more chances to nonviolent offenders who run afoul of the state's drug laws.

Reasonable people may take differing views on whether the accommodations Connecticut's criminal justice system makes in the face of illegal drug activity are sufficient. There's an argument that using illegal drugs by a school or day care center should not result in an enhanced penalty. There's also a case to be made that those facilities are particularly vulnerable to illegal drug use in their vicinity. People make mistakes. There are effective alternatives to incarceration.

Addiction is often a punishing mystery. Its victims extend far beyond the addicted. A compassionate society tries to help the offender and protect victims. We already do plenty of that in Connecticut. Now we will do more. Plenty of bites at that apple for you.

What is unsettling is the unforgiving hostility of the state's three highest elected officials to a handful of state-recognized tribes seeking to win federal recognition. The sin of Native American aspiration, it seems, is unforgivable. Worse than using illegal drugs near a school.

Maybe the tribes seeking federal recognition do not make shrewd political donations to the state Democrats' dodgy federal campaign committee. That's the one state elections enforcement officials are investigating. Lawyers for state Democrats are engaging in a fierce fight to avoid producing documents that might paint an unflattering picture of attempts to undo the campaign finance reforms Malloy and others championed in public.

It promises to be a long battle. If the investigation continues to go against state Democrats, you can be certain they will seek many ways to thwart it. No limits on bites of the apple for them — only for Native Americans in their Connecticut, whose governor applauds the sound of the door slamming in their faces.

*Kevin Rennie is a lawyer and a former Republican state legislator. He can be reached at [kfrennie@yahoo.com](mailto:kfrennie@yahoo.com).*

**Direct Link:** <http://www.courant.com/opinion/op-ed/hc-op-rennie-connecticut-native-americans-0705-20150702-column.html>

## **Influential Montana Native American journalist dies**

By Aja Goare - MTN News

*Jul 01, 2015 5:45 PM MST Updated: Jul 02, 2015 8:29 AM MST*



Bonnie Red Elk is a founding member of NAJA (NAJA)

A prominent Native American voice fell silent this past weekend when the tribal woman who founded the Fort Peck Journal passed away.

Bonnie Red Elk, 62 of Poplar, was also a founding member of the Native American Journalist Association, an Oklahoma-based Native media and communications agency.

Red Elk's influence spread across the state and elsewhere to Indian newspapers and journals.

The prestigious Montana Free Press Award was given to Red Elk by the University of Montana for her tenacity and courage in reporting.

The NAJA organization wrote that one moment most indicative of Red Elk's work was when she was forced out of her post at the Fort Peck tribe's government newspaper.

"At the time of her firing, she had been pressing for answers on spending of tribal money for the elected official's purported personal travel to Florida," the post reads.

Red Elk suffered a stroke eight months ago and died Sunday in a Wolf Point nursing home.

Her funeral will be held Saturday in Poplar.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.ktvq.com/story/29457291/influential-montana-native-american-journalists-dies>

## **Pamunkey Indians Given Federal Recognition**

**Native American group becomes first Virginia tribe granted federal recognition by Interior Department.**

Associated Press July 2, 2015 | 2:20 p.m. EDT + More

By BROCK VERGAKIS, Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — The Department of Interior granted federal recognition to a Virginia Indian tribe for the first time on Thursday, more than 400 years after the first permanent English settlers encountered those Indians.

The federal designation of the Pamunkey Indian Tribe allows it to receive certain federal benefits on medical care, housing and education, among other things. The Pamunkey are only the second tribe to be granted recognition since President Barack Obama took office, joining hundreds of others nationwide that have received that distinction over the years. A telephone message left with the tribe was not immediately returned Thursday.

The recognition also leaves open the possibility of the tribe seeking a casino through a separate approval process, though the 200-member tribe has said it has no plans to do so. Still, the tribe's application was opposed by MGM Resorts, which is building a casino at the National Harbor outside the nation's capital in Maryland.



The Pamunkey's 1,200-acre reservation is about 25 miles east of Richmond on the Pamunkey River in rural King William County. A California-based group that has supported gambling limits in that state also opposed the Pamunkey's application. In the United States, there are 493 Indian casinos and 1,262 commercial casinos.

Nationwide, there are 566 federal recognized tribes and hundreds more want to join their ranks, including 14 others in Virginia. Since 1978, the government has recognized 17 tribes and rejected the petitions of 34 other groups. Receiving recognition is a years-long process requiring volumes of historical records. The Interior Department said the Pamunkey provide one of the most well-documented petitions ever and easily satisfied its requirements.

Several members of the Congressional Black Caucus opposed recognition because they said the tribe had a history of banning interracial marriages with blacks, which MGM also pointed to in its opposition. The tribe has said the ban was repealed in 2012 — two

years after the tribe had submitted materials to the Interior Department for its bid for recognition. The Interior Department first said the Pamunkey met its requirements for recognition in January 2014 and a final decision was expected in March, but that was delayed after public opposition arose.

Pamunkey Chief Kevin Brown told the CBC in a letter that the intermarriage ban was rooted in Virginia's culture of racism, where "Racial intermixture was raised repeatedly as a rationale to divest us of our reservation and our Indian status."

Virginia's 1924 Racial Integrity Act made it illegal for whites and non-whites to marry, and the registrar of the state's Bureau of Vital Statistics, Dr. Walter Plecker, launched an aggressive campaign at the time to prevent the "mongrelization" of the white "master race" by what he called "pseudo-Indians."

Plecker believed Indians wanted to 'escape Negro status' in order to attend white schools and marry whites. Plecker ordered that Indians be classified as "colored" on birth and marriage certificates and threatened doctors and midwives with jail for noncompliance.

In documents released Thursday, the Interior Department wrote that the Indian Civil Rights Act only applies to federally recognized tribes, and thus the intermarriage ban wasn't applicable to the Pamunkey at the time of its application. It also notes that the department examines applications in light of historical context.

"For example, interracial marriage was a crime in the Commonwealth of Virginia until the United States Supreme Court struck down that law in 1967," the department wrote in its determination. "Although such historical evidence often offends today's sensibilities, it is, nonetheless, evidence to be analyzed. This argument does not merit a revision to the evaluation or conclusions under the criteria."

The Pamunkey is already recognized by Virginia's government, and each Thanksgiving in an oft-photographed ceremony the tribe's chief visits the governor of Virginia in a tribute ceremony. The ceremony traces its roots to a treaty signed in 1677 between the colony's governor and several Indian leaders, including the Pamunkey.

The tribe was considered the most powerful tribe in the Powhatan Paramount Chiefdom, which greeted the English settlers at Jamestown, and claims Pocahontas among its lineage.

U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Virginia, said in a statement that recognition, beyond its federal benefits, honors the tribe's identity.

"The Pamunkey are the first Virginia Indian tribe to receive federal recognition, over 400 years after making contact with the first European settlers. Despite the integral role the tribes played in American history and the unique cultures they have continued to maintain for thousands of years, they have faced barriers to recognition due to



extraordinary circumstances out of their control," Kaine said. "Today's announcement is an important step toward righting this historical wrong."

He said he hoped the development would spur "long-overdue recognition" for six other Virginia tribes.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2015/07/02/virginias-pamunkey-indian-tribe-granted-federal-recognition>

## Imagining Reconciliation: Bemidji Group Works Toward Common Ground

[Tanya H. Lee](#)

7/1/15

A grassroots movement led by people in the town of Bemidji, Minnesota, and their neighbors both on and off nearby reservations have set out to find a path to reconciliation between whites and American Indians. No government is taking part; no plan has been laid; no blame will be assessed; and no one knows how long this journey might take.

"Truth and reconciliation is not an event," says Dr. Anton Treuer, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, one of the people facilitating the process. "It's not something that happens in a week, a month or a year. It's a process and it might take a really long time. If it's just something short then it's only something to make people feel good rather than to really change the culture and reconcile the historical experiences of diverse people." Treuer is an author and a professor at Bemidji State University.



At a planning meeting of the Bemidji Truth and Reconciliation project, from left, are Minnesota Native News reporter Melissa Townsend; Simone Senogles, Red Lake Nation; Tori Graves, and Anton Treuer, Leech Lake Ojibwe. (Michael Meurers)

Understanding is key. Becky LaPlante, of the Blandin Foundation, has been working on a similar effort, the Circle of Healing, being carried out by a group from the Grand Rapids,

Minnesota area. She says, “For the first 18 months, the 30 or so participants just sat in a circle and listened to each other. We began to build awareness about our shared history, which is largely unknown in dominant culture and to some extent in Native culture.”

The Blandin Foundation has been sending people to participate in the Bemidji effort, at the invitation of people in that group.

That kind of inclusiveness is equally crucial. Justin Beaulieu, Red Lake Band of Chippewa, says, “One of our principles is to make sure the group is inclusive, to make sure everyone can participate and they feel comfortable participating. Who is at the table right now and who else needs to be?”



Flags of four nations fly proudly at the dedication of a statue of Shaynowishkung, Chief Bemidji. From front: U.S., Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, White Earth Band of Chippewa, POW/MIA. (Michael Meuers)

The faith communities are among the groups that need to be there. Beaulieu says, “There was a significant amount of harm that was done to children and to families by the faith communities, looking at Manifest Destiny and how these people were utilizing the laws to take children out of their homes, to separate the families. So how do we heal those parts? We are trying to identify where the harm was and how those things have impacted our generations, the adverse childhood experiences and how those cycles have perpetuated over time.”

He notes, however, “The most important thing is that we’re not trying to assess blame or to make somebody feel like they’re bad. It’s about understanding what happened, why those things happened, then healing them.”

This effort is really just emerging,” says Treuer. “We didn’t even put out a public call, but a couple hundred people are involved in the process so far.”

Other efforts in other places have had varying degrees of success. From the movement in Germany after World War II to apologize for atrocities committed against the Jews, to Desmond Tutu’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa in the 1990s

following the end of apartheid, to Australia's apology to its Aboriginal people in 2008 and to Canada, which just issued the final report of its Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding First Nations peoples, nations have found that dealing with extremely painful oppression and far-reaching injustices is very hard work.



A project to add Ojibwe words to signage in Bemidji has met with great success. Principal Drew Hildenbrand points to a sign that says, "Welcome to Bemidji Middle School." (Michael Meurers)

In the U.S., efforts to bring about reconciliation between the colonizers and the colonized have included the 1993 apology from Congress to Native Hawaiians, Kevin Gover's apology on behalf of the BIA in 2000 and an apology to Native peoples signed into law by President Obama in 2009.

Part of the difficulty is the inclination to put difficult events into the past and keep them there. Beaulieu says, "For me, personally, I hear 'Get over it' all the time from people, or 'We didn't do that.' I just want people to understand, 'Of course you didn't do that, but it does have residual effects that have come down the line. And there's new research being done that shows that those changes within the physiology can be passed along. We are trying to get over it, but it's going to take help from everyone and understanding.'"

Linsey McMurrin, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, is on the staff at Peacemaker Resources, Inc., another group invited to participate. "When we talk about historical trauma, people think that's all in the past. What they don't understand is that it's also ongoing. That piece really needs to be brought to the forefront. So many people dismiss the concerns that Indian people and their allies have about historical trauma," she says.

What happens next in Bemidji is part of the journey. McMurrin says, "We're just reaching out to the community. We don't want to tell people how this should go and we want to be really mindful not to recreate conditions of colonialism, forced participation and paternalism. We need to focus on relationship building and strengthening those relationships that have already been established."



During the Grand Entry at the Bemijigamaag Powwow on April 4, 2015, city and state officials walk with tribal officials. About 3,000 people attended. (Michael Meuers)

Treuer summarized some of the challenges. “You can only really influence people who are in the room with you, so the goal is not to chase everybody away from the table and sit there eating alone. That’s why a lot of these things have failed in the past. If it goes too fast, then sometimes non-Native folks get really uncomfortable and step away because they’re way beyond their comfort zone, but if it goes too slowly then a lot of times people of color feel like it’s a feel-good pat on the back and nobody’s willing to do any real change. The trick is to go a bit in between where everybody agrees to stretch the bounds of their normal comfort and everybody agrees to be patient and kind in going through that process at the same time.”

And so goes Bemidji, one step at a time.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/07/01/imagining-reconciliation-bemidji-group-works-toward-common-ground-160913>

## **Outlawed By The States, Payday Lenders Take Refuge On Reservations**

Posted: 06/29/2015, [Ben Walsh](#) 10:07 am EDT Updated: 35 minutes ago





*The Chippewa Cree reservation in Montana ([Thom Bridge/Bridge Photographics](#))*

Ken Rees had a problem. For years, his company, Think Cash, had made millions of dollars by offering poor Americans quick access to money when they needed to fix their cars, replace broken appliances or pay medical bills. Unlike the brick-and-mortar payday loan companies that dot street corners and strip malls across the country, however, Think Cash was an online venture, built with the convenience of the new economy in mind. A loan was only a few clicks away.

For borrowers, there was a catch. Payday loans typically come with high interest rates that can add hundreds or thousands of dollars to the original loan amount and trap poor borrowers in a cycle of debt. For this reason, many states have cracked down on payday lenders. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia ban payday loans altogether, and all of the remaining states regulate payday lending to some degree.

With Think Cash, Rees had found a clever way around these regulations: The loans were passed through a nationally chartered bank, thereby exempting them from state banking laws. This "rent-a-bank" model had been popular among online payday lenders since at least the late 1990s. But by 2010, various federal regulators had all but shut down the arrangement. Rees needed a new way to keep his business alive.

The solution he found was relatively straightforward: He'd work with Native American tribes, which are exempt from state regulations. Think Cash renamed itself Think Finance, and in early March 2011 sent a letter to the Chippewa Cree Tribe proposing that they create a joint lending venture.

Such arrangements between online payday loan companies and Native American tribes have become increasingly popular. Indeed, as the rent-a-bank model has waned in the face of government regulations, the "rent-a-tribe" model has taken off in recent years. Today, a quarter of the [\\$4.1 billion](#) the online payday loan industry takes in each year goes to 30 or so lenders based on reservations, according to [Al Jazeera America](#).

"Too many hardworking people are trapped by the manipulative tactics of payday lenders, from exorbitant interest rates to deceptive debt collection practices," New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman told The Huffington Post. "Law enforcement

agencies must stay vigilant in order to protect families from scammers and illegal lenders looking to exploit them.”

The Chippewa Cree, a small tribe with about 6,000 members in a remote part of Montana near the Canadian border, made an ideal partner for Think Finance. Jobs on the reservation are scarce, and unemployment there hovers between 60 and 70 percent. The arrangement with Think Finance offered a way to generate millions of dollars for the tribe and spur wider economic development on the reservation. Think Finance agreed to build a call center to serve the payday lending business, according to the agreement between the company and the tribe, and the Chippewa Cree planned to use revenue from the venture to fund social welfare programs and help build a new tribal health center.

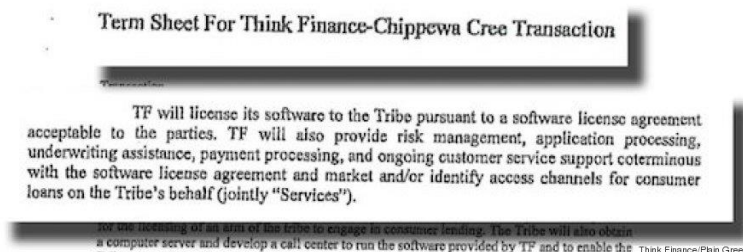
According to one tribal leader with direct knowledge of the deal, Think Finance also made it clear to the Chippewa Cree that if the tribe didn't accept Think Finance's terms, the company would be perfectly happy to find another tribe that would. Within two weeks of receiving Think Finance's letter, the Chippewa Cree, who had tried for a year to run their own lending business, agreed to the arrangement. The tribe partnered with Think Finance and renamed its lending company Plain Green. The tribe would own 51 percent of the company, and Think Finance would own 49 percent.

The new venture would offer “installment loans,” a term the industry prefers to use instead of payday loans. Like traditional payday loans, installment loans are small loans with high interest rates that often trap borrowers in a morass of debt. Unlike traditional payday loans, they are paid back over time periods longer than a single pay cycle. Plain Green says its minimum repayment cycle is four months.

Ten months after Plain Green started making loans, Think Finance [lauded the venture](#) in a blog post as a “big win for both consumers and the Chippewa Cree.”

“Dozens of tribal members are employed by Plain Green and every tribal member has already received a payment based on the success of the product. The tribe has even been able to rebuild a baseball field with revenues generated by Plain Green,” the post said.

Like Think Cash before it, Plain Green makes small, short-term, high-interest loans to people all over the country who have no other source of credit. Although the company is nominally owned by the Chippewa Cree, the tribe has little actual involvement in its operations and receives a tiny fraction of the revenue generated by the business.



The tribe has received an estimated \$28 million to \$32 million from Plain Green since it was created, according to documents obtained by HuffPost that were filed in tribal court as part of a case between the tribe's former chairman and other tribal leaders that involves the agreement with Think Finance. A March 11, 2011, [agreement](#) between the tribe and Think Finance submitted as an exhibit in that case says that Plain Green had received 4.5 to 5.5 percent of the revenues collected by the operation, meaning Think Finance and other third parties received an estimated \$500 million to \$700 million.



*Ken Rees*

The huge possibility for profit in this industry has caught the attention of Silicon Valley investors, who look at the people on the fringes of the banking system and see a huge potential customer base. Almost [10 million](#) American households have no bank account. A further 25 million households (almost 1 in 5) have a bank account but also use non-bank financial products like payday loans. Think Finance has benefited from this flow of Silicon Valley money. Sequoia Capital (which famously funded Oracle, Cisco, Yahoo and Google) and Technology Crossover Ventures (which has invested in Facebook, Netflix, Spotify and Vice) have [each backed](#) the company. Through a spokeswoman, Technology Crossover Ventures declined to comment. Sequoia did not respond to requests for comment.

While lending companies and their investors rake in money, however, the situation is more precarious for the more than 3 million Americans who take out online payday loans each year.

“The very purpose of an online lender affiliating with a tribe is specifically and expressly so that they can lend in violation of state laws,” Ellen Harnick, a payday lending expert at the Center For Responsible Lending, told HuffPost. And it's the poorest Americans -- the



ones who need quick cash to address the most pressing issues in their lives -- who are most at risk.

State regulators have taken numerous measures to protect borrowers, passing laws limiting the size and frequency of short-term loans and setting maximum interest rates that lenders can charge borrowers. Laws in 14 states and D.C. that outlaw payday lending make online, high-interest installment lending illegal as well. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is also in the midst of writing the first federal payday lending regulations.

But by working with Native American tribes, companies like Think Finance have largely managed to stay one step ahead of consumer protection laws.



*A casino on the reservation ([Thom Bridge/Bridge Photographics](#))*

The Think Finance-Plain Green business model is representative of these growing online payday lending operations. The loans, and millions of dollars of fees paid to Think Finance, pass through Plain Green and circumvent state regulations, while the real work of running the lending business happens elsewhere. Thanks to Think Finance's online lending platform, Plain Green is able to make loans all over the country. Eventually, the loans end up owned by a Cayman Islands servicing company. And Plain Green, which cites the Chippewa Cree's sovereignty in its lending agreement with customers, says that state and federal regulators have no legal standing to complain.

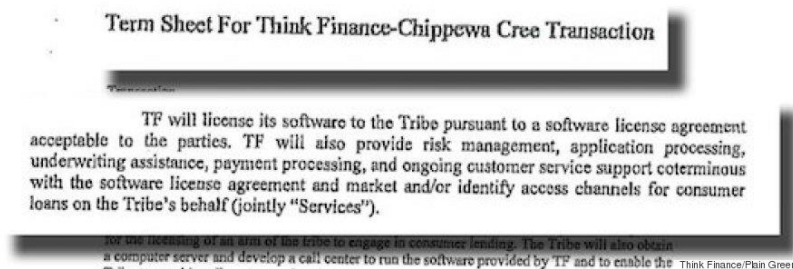
Jen Burner, a Think Finance spokeswoman, told HuffPost that the company simply licenses its tools and support services to clients. "We are proud to be a service-provider to Plain Green LLC," she said.

After entering into its arrangement with the Chippewa Cree, Think Finance also made deals with two other tribes: the Otoe-Missouria in Oklahoma, which run Great Plains Lending, and the Tunica-Biloxi in Louisiana, which run MobiLoan. Think Finance also sells its technology to banks that create and issue consumer lending products. And in 2014, it spun off its own consumer lending products into a separate company, Elevate, of

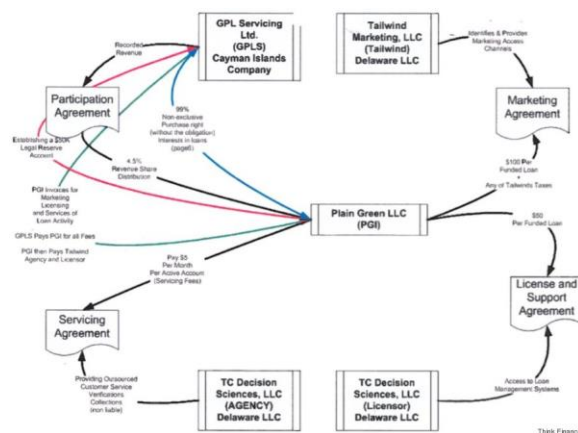
which Ken Rees is the CEO. Think Finance's former chief integrity officer, Martin Wong, is Think Finance's current CEO.

"There is a strategic smokescreen in place obfuscating the true relationship between Think Finance and Plain Green Loans," said Radek Jagielski, a senior analyst at PrivCo, a provider of financial data on privately held companies. Jagielski researched the companies at HuffPost's request.

According to the agreement submitted as an exhibit in tribal court and a former Plain Green executive, Think Finance provided everything the tribe needed to start the online lending business: a portfolio of Think Finance customers from its old rent-a-bank operation, underwriting software, payment processing, marketing, an offshore loan buyer and legal representation.



Plain Green offers small loans of between \$250 and \$1,000 for first-time borrowers. Returning customers are eligible for loans up to \$3,000. The agreement between the tribe and the company explains how when a customer logs on to Plain Green's website and applies for a loan, Think Finance's software processes the customer's information, evaluates whether to make the loan and calculates fees. According to a 2011 flow chart created by Think Finance, Plain Green pays TC Decision Sciences, which Think Finance has said in federal court filings is one of its entities, \$50 for each approved and funded loan.



A former Plain Green executive and member of the Chippewa Cree tribe who requested anonymity due to fears of retribution told HuffPost that at the end of each day, a Plain

Green officer signed off on all the loans approved by Think Finance's software. That meant that technically, the loans were made by Plain Green, despite the fact that the tribal company had no meaningful role in the lending process.

To find more people to make loans to, Plain Green pays a company called Tailwind Marketing, which Think Finance has said in federal court motions is also one of its entities. According to the flow chart detailing the business structure, Plain Green pays \$100 plus tax to Tailwind for every approved borrower Tailwind refers.

The flow chart also shows that after the loan is made and a borrower has a Plain Green account and is making payments, TC Decision Sciences charges Plain Green \$5 a month per active account for servicing activities like customer service, verification and collections.

GPLS may from time to time purchase participation interests in each Loan that meets agreed upon criteria within two business days of the funding of the Loan at 100% par value.

it to fund loans made and to receive payments from customers on each business day. Haynes shall fund an account at such institution with sufficient monies to fund the Loans. Think Finance/Plain Green

Moreover, Plain Green doesn't actually own the loans that it makes. Instead, the flow chart and the agreement between the tribe and Think Finance specify that up to 99 percent of the loans are bought less than two days after they are made by a Cayman Islands loan servicing company, GPL Servicing. As is common with Cayman Islands corporations, it is almost impossible to determine who owns GPL Servicing. The firm was incorporated in February 2011, a month before Think Finance struck its deal with the Chippewa Cree.

The 4.5 percent of the revenue that Plain Green receives as part of its arrangement with Think Finance is paid by GPL Servicing, according to the terms of the agreement between Plain Green and Think Finance and the flow chart.

#### Revenues

GPLS shall pay the Tribe 4.5% of cash revenue received on account of the Loans for which GPLS has acquired a participation interest each month and will advance to the Tribe as a prepayment on revenue, \$50,000 each month for the first six months or until such time that the amount received exceeds \$50,000. Additionally, the Tribe will be reimbursed for all out-of-pocket expenses.

GPLS shall pay a fee to Haynes equal to 1% of the cash revenue received on account of the Loans for which GPLS has acquired a participation interest each month.

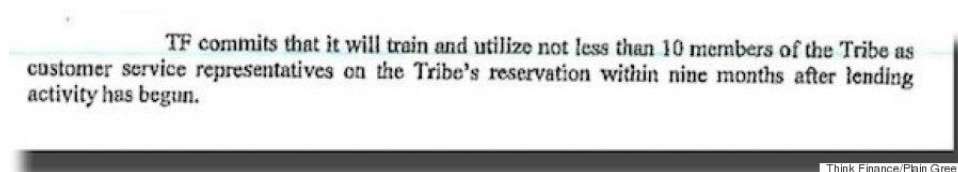
For the 1% of the loan portfolio retained by the Tribe, the Tribe will receive 100% of the cash revenue minus 100% of the losses.

Think Finance/Plain Green

The numbers in the revenue-sharing agreement between Think Finance and Plain Green do "not accurately reflect Plain Green's business model, its agreements with outside parties, the magnitude of its financial contributions to the tribe or the dramatic improvement in welfare the tribe's membership has experienced as a direct result of Plain

Green's success," said Brian Bartlett, a former aide to Mitt Romney, George W. Bush and Dick Cheney who serves as the Washington, D.C.-based spokesman for the tribe and Plain Green. Bartlett said the Chippewa Cree retain 100 percent of Plain Green's profits and that the money is dedicated entirely to the tribal budget.

Bartlett declined to specify how much money Plain Green generates for the tribe. But based on the 4.5 to 5.5 percent cut outlined in the agreement submitted in tribal court, Plain Green takes in about \$7 million to \$8 million a year. The rest goes to Think Finance and other third parties. That appears to be relatively generous, as far as such arrangements go. Another Native American tribe has a revenue-sharing agreement with a different lending platform that gives the tribe just 1 percent of the profits, according to [Bloomberg](#).



Although the Chippewa Cree have made millions of dollars, the arrangement hasn't sparked broader economic development on the reservation. Think Finance has exceeded the commitment it made in its agreement with the tribe to employ at least 10 tribal members: The call center on the reservation employs approximately 15 people. But even doing more than the deal calls for hasn't done much to alter the tribe's economic picture - the unemployment rate has remained unchanged at around 60 to 70 percent.

Plain Green's contribution to employment on the reservation is also far below its potential. [Accounting records](#) filed in tribal court show that Plain Green spent approximately \$3.6 million in 2013 on off-reservation call-center services to companies based out of Georgia, Pennsylvania and Texas. One month, the records show Plain Green paid for the equivalent of 150 full-time off-reservation employees at the call centers.

"Assertions that the executives of Plain Green have 'no meaningful role' or 'actual involvement' in operating its own business are demonstrably false, degrading to the members the Chippewa Cree and its elected Tribal leadership, and a disparagement of Native American Tribal sovereignty generally. Plain Green is headquartered on our reservation and led by our tribal members – and our people are incredibly proud of the business we've built," Plain Green's CEO, Joel Rosette, said through his spokesman, Bartlett.

Some borrowers say they have fared poorly in their dealings with Think Finance and Plain Green. Clarnetta Rice, a 67-year-old retired customer service representative for the Philadelphia health department, illustrates the problems borrowers commonly face based on the terms of Plain Green loans. Payday lending is illegal under Pennsylvania law. But in April 2012, Rice went online and borrowed \$800 from Plain Green in order to get her car fixed. In the three months it took her to pay that loan back, she racked up \$1,383.74 in interest. Still, in August 2012, she borrowed another \$1,000 from Plain Green, and in

September 2013 another \$1,600. Paying her last loan off cost her \$2,834 in interest over just four months. All told, Rice borrowed \$3,400 from Plain Green and paid \$6,197.58 in interest. To cover that amount, she took out yet another loan from another online payday lender.

“As I was keying in to get the money to get that car fixed, I knew I was wrong,” Rice told HuffPost, “but I had no other choice.”



*The health center on the reservation ([Thom Bridge/Bridge Photographics](#))*

The payday loan industry as a whole is structured to take advantage of people like Rice. “Payday lending, whether it’s online or storefront, is designed to get borrowers in for what they expect will be a quick fix to a financial problem, but will instead keep them in long-term, high-cost debt that will destabilize them financially and set them back substantially,” said the Center For Responsible Lending’s Ellen Harnick. When borrowers can’t make payments, they often repay the loan they couldn’t afford in the first place by taking out a new loan, a practice called churn. According to the Center for Responsible Lending, churn accounts for [76 percent](#) of all payday loans.

In states that allow payday loans, regulators license lenders and set limits on how much money borrowers can receive, how often they can take out loans and what the interest rates can be. Online lending operations like Plain Green are subject to none of those restrictions.

“For all of its problems, storefront payday lending at least occurs within a system of state licensing,” Nick Bourke, a payday lending expert at the Pew Charitable Trusts, told HuffPost.

On average, online borrowers are charged an interest rate of [about 650 percent](#), a full 261 percentage points above the national storefront payday lending average, according to a Pew Charitable Trusts report. The average annual percentage rate on credit cards, for comparison, is [15.89 percent](#).



Plain Green's interest rates top out at [378.95 percent](#), and the company gives out loans for as much as \$3,000 -- an amount that far exceeds the \$500 maximum set by most states. While some states also limit how often person can borrow from a traditional payday lender in a set timeframe, some Plain Green borrowers have been able to borrow more frequently than their state regulation would allow. Plain Green notes it does not allow borrowers to take out more than one loan at a time.

What's more, whereas traditional payday loans are secured with post-dated checks, online lenders often require direct access to a borrower's bank account. As a result, many borrowers are hit with overdraft fees from their bank when the lender tries to make withdrawals to repay the loan. One-third of online payday borrowers said unauthorized withdrawals had been made from their bank accounts, according to [a 2014 Pew report on fraud and abuse](#) in the online lending industry.

"With online payday lenders," Bourke said, "70 percent of providers are not fully licensed" to offer loans in states in which they do business. Some lenders offer borrowers' personal, sensitive data -- not only names, addresses and phone numbers but also Social Security numbers and bank account information -- up for a fee, selling it to "lead generators" who in turn sell the data to other lending companies looking for new customers in states where payday lending may be illegal.



*The Chippewa Cree reservation ([Thom Bridge/Bridge Photographics](#))*

After years of profits, regulators finally may have caught up with Think Finance.

In November, Pennsylvania's attorney general filed [a lawsuit](#) against Think Finance and Ken Rees, alleging they violated the state's racketeering, consumer protection and lending laws. And on May 13, two Vermont women sued Plain Green in federal court, alleging that the company is violating federal trade and consumer protection laws. "Plain Green and the Tribe intend to evaluate the complaint and determine the appropriate response," said Rosette, Plain Green's CEO.

Tribal sovereignty “is being used as a shield to protect bad conduct,” Matthew Byrne, a lawyer for the Vermont women, told HuffPost. “The real problem is that it takes advantage of people who are in a financially challenged position.”

Pennsylvania argues that Think Finance’s arrangements with the Cree, the Otoe-Missouria and Tunica-Biloxi amount to a conspiracy to evade state law. The state’s complaint alleges that Think Finance, “as an alternative to making the loans in their own name, structured, participated in, and operated this scheme in which they act as providers of contracted ‘services’ to the bank and the tribes,” deliberately misrepresenting who was providing the loans. That, the state argues, means Think Finance has violated Pennsylvania’s racketeering laws.

Think Finance says in [its motion](#) responding to Pennsylvania’s allegations that it provides “services to the tribes, and the tribal lenders make short-term online loans from their reservations. Think Finance is not alleged to itself underwrite, fund, or originate any loans to Pennsylvania borrowers. The agreements that borrowers signed with each of the tribes reflect this reality. The loan agreements are subject to tribal law, and tribal law only.” In a [separate motion](#), Rees says “loan documents signed by Pennsylvania consumers provide that the transactions are subject to tribal law.”

This is not the first time regulators have taken on online payday lenders. New York has enforced its ban on payday lending by all but demanding that 117 banks stop processing payments between residents and 35 online payday lenders. Schneiderman, the state’s attorney general, also reached a [\\$20 million](#) settlement with Western Sky, an online payday lending company owned by a member of South Dakota’s Cheyenne River Sioux but backed by California-based Cash Call and another company, over allegations of collecting illegal interest.

Colorado engaged in a long-running legal battle [against AMG Services](#) and its alleged effective owner, Scott Tucker, who has made billions in online payday lending and spends large portions of his time racing Ferraris in Europe. The Miami tribe of Oklahoma claimed that it owned AMG, and Tucker was simply an employee. A Colorado judge [ruled in 2012](#) that Tucker had at one point owned the business, but his transfer of ownership to the tribe in 2008 meant state authorities were unable to investigate the lenders for allegedly violating state laws. This year, the Federal Trade Commission reached a [record settlement](#) with AMG and MNE Services, another tribal lending company, over allegations of deceptive loan practices. Without admitting wrongdoing, the companies paid \$21 million and forgave \$285 million in loans and fees owed by borrowers.

Pennsylvania’s case differs from these previous challenges in that it attempts to sidestep the issue of tribal sovereignty, which is legally a federal matter (not to mention a cultural minefield). Instead, by naming Think Finance and its related entities as defendants, Pennsylvania aims simply to prove that a conspiracy to evade the state’s lending laws has taken place. Similarly, the Vermont case does not directly involve tribal sovereignty, but instead claims Plain Green has violated federal lending and consumer protection laws.



Even with state licensing and new federal regulation, there may still be room for online lenders to exploit borrowers, the Center For Responsible Lending's Harnick warns. But the outcome of these legal cases could put a significant dent in Think Finance's ability to use Native American tribes as a regulatory shield -- not just in Pennsylvania and Vermont, but elsewhere as well.

"The tribal lending model seems to be failing," Bourke said, "because on the one hand it's not providing enough protection for consumers, and on the other hand courts are increasingly saying that it is not sufficient for lenders to only get a license in association with a Native American tribe." That means online lenders will be more likely to want to get licenses from every state where they operate, he noted, which would allow for tighter regulation of the industry.

"There will still be a lot of bad loans made," Bourke said, but at least it will be "much harder for fraud to happen."

*Hunter Stuart contributed additional reporting.*

*This story has been updated with additional comments from Joel Rosette, the Plain Green CEO.*

**Clarification:** *Language has been changed to clarify the difference in repayment times between payday loans and installment loans, and to elaborate that Plain Green limits customers to no more than one loan at a time, which must be paid in full before any application for a new loan is made.*

**Direct Link:** [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/29/online-payday-lenders-reservations\\_n\\_7625006.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/29/online-payday-lenders-reservations_n_7625006.html)